# PR

# PARTISAN REVIEW

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January 4, 1971

Mr. Larry Rivers
404 East 14th Street
New York, N.Y.

My dear Larry:

We are, of course, delighted that you have agreed to design the cover for a future issue of PR.

Concerning your suggested concept, however -- i.e., to portray "the PR editors and its contributors in a high-stepping can-can of a chorus-line to represent a sort of 'partisan REVUE' (sic!)" -- I would be less than candid if I failed to convey to you the very real ambivalence felt here at PR by certain senior staffers. Per-

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# Oxford University Press

## Catholic Radicals in Brazil

*By* EMANUEL DE KADT, *University of Sussex.* This book traces the emergence and development of the ideas of a small but significant section of Brazil's Catholic intelligentsia which attempted to help the underprivileged to find solutions to their problems. It focuses on the Movement for Basic Education, its field of operation, and its main tools. (*For the Royal Institute of International Affairs.*) $9.75

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# Oxford University Press

## Gertrude Stein in Pieces

*By* RICHARD BRIDGMAN, *University of California, Berkeley.* "I don't know of anything else that does what Richard Bridgman has done in this study, which is to assess every item in the mass of Gertrude Stein's writing on its own merit and build a picture of her life and career in literature. . . . It will supersede everything else in print as a guide and companion to study of her work." —WARNER BERTHOFF $12.50

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*By* JAMES E. BRESLIN, *University of California, Berkeley.* "I've seldom come across criticism so balanced, unpretentious, honest. Breslin has read virtually everything on and by Williams, and his book is quietly learned and filled with fresh insights, presented clearly and enthusiastically. . . . In Breslin the poet has found a most able and persuasive spokesman."—WILLIAM HEYEN, *Saturday Review* $6.95

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**Wallace Stevens:**
*The Poem as Act*
*By Merle E. Brown*
In this volume Merle Brown presents his theory of the ideal relationship between criticism and poetry, justifying it through the whole of his perceptive analysis of Wallace Stevens. He clarifies some essential problems in the poetry and demonstrates an understanding that has eluded Stevens's critics for some time.
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*115 pages* *$5.50*

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*192 pages* *$7.95*

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## NOTES

**PETER WEISS** has just completed **Holderlin,** another new play. The sections of **Trotsky in Exile** which **PR** is running this issue are parts of a long play which will be produced in London soon. (All inquiries concerning the rights for amateur stock production should be directed to the Lantz–Donadio Literary Agency, 111 West 57th Street, New York 10019.) . . . **JOHN HOLLANDER**'s new book, **The Night Mirror,** will appear this fall. . . . **JEROME NATHANSON** graduated from Columbia in October '70 with a B.A. in Greek. . . . **DORIS LESSING** writes us that "I am about to write a serial novel for a new undergroundish newspaper called **Ink** run by Ed Victor. This is very exciting for me. We haven't had serial novels in this country for a long time. Probably not since Dickens." Miss Lessing's latest book, **Briefing for a Descent into Hell,** was just published by Knopf. . . . **WILLIAM APPLEMAN WILLIAMS** lives in a small fishing and log-shipping port on the Oregon coast and teaches at Oregon State University. Mr. Williams "left the Ph.D. factory assembly

(*Continued on page 128*)

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# Phi Beta Kappa Bicentennial Fellowships

On December 5, 1976, Phi Beta Kappa will have participated for two hundred years in the intellectual life of the United States. In recognition of that occasion The Society's United Chapters plan to sponsor a series of books, to appear before or during 1976, with the general title MAN THINKING IN AMERICA.

The Bicentennial Commission of Phi Beta Kappa is looking for books of broad scope dealing with the cultural crisis of our time, and in particular, with the responsibilities of the intellectual in that crisis. Our cultural institutions and our cultural values are in a state of revolutionary ferment. What are the basic elements of this ferment? What is the essential nature of this revolution? What perspectives will enable us to distinguish them and it most clearly, to separate the ephemeral from the probably enduring? What are the most promising directions, now and later?

The Commission hopes that the books will suggest the new attitudes, vocabularies, and methods needed to understand the present situation and to prescribe for the future. Ideally, each of the books will show, by treatment of some aspect of American institutions and culture, a path from the present disruption toward a rational future order.

In order to find appropriate authors for these books—and to provide those authors free time for their research and writing—the Society will award a minimum of five Fellowships with stipends of $20,000 each. The competition for these Fellowships will close on October 15, 1971. Application forms and further information may be obtained from Richard Schlatter, Phi Beta Kappa Bicentennial Fellowships, Provost's Office, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey 08903.

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*NEW FROM YALE*

## The Wild Prayer of Longing

Poetry and the Sacred

by Nathan A. Scott, Jr.

In his newest book Nathan A. Scott continues his exploration of the new forms in which the religious imagination finds expression in contemporary cultural life. He uses the immensely fruitful ideas of Martin Heidegger to suggest how a sacramental vision of the world may define itself without resort to supernaturalism. Finally, he analyzes the poetry of Theodore Roethke as a significant example in recent literature of a sacramental vision unencumbered by supernaturalist illusion. This volume is the clearest and most penetrating statement Mr. Scott has yet made about the relationship between contemporary developments in the arts and theological dilemmas. $6.75

## Dickens as Satirist

by Sylvia Manning

This lucid analysis of Dickens's increasingly complex vision of life's struggle against the forces of stagnation and rigidity shows that clashes of style, particularly those engendered between satiric and novelistic interest, are not merely necessary but crucial to the special power of the Dickensian novel. **Pickwick Papers, Dombey and Son, Bleak House, Hard Times, Little Dorrit,** and **Our Mutual Friend** are all discussed, illustrating the techniques and devices by which Dickens achieved the full expression of his indictment of society. $8.75

## The Techniques of Strangeness in Symbolist Poetry

by James L. Kugel

Equally at home in French and Russian as well as English, Mr. Kugel approaches Symbolism from an international point of view. Surveying both the rhetorical and structural devices crucial to the sense of "strangeness" in such verse, he provides fresh readings of works by Nerval, Rimbaud, and Mallarmé, Brjusov, Blok, and Mandel'stam, Wallace Stevens and Hart Crane, among others. "A testimony to a remarkably wide range of reading and insight, to a genuine literary sensibility and sophistication."—**Victor Erlich** $5.75

## Poetry in East Germany

Adjustments, Visions, and Provocations, 1945-1970

by John Flores

The first survey in English of the problems and achievements of poetry in the "other Germany," this remarkably balanced study fuses the methods and interests of the cultural historian with those of the literary critic. It devotes particular attention to the responses of eight individual poets, covering two generations, to the demands and challenges of East German society. "Fluent, full of understanding detail, this will be a standard reference work in America for some years."—**Geoffrey H. Hartman** $12.50

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# THE POLITICS OF POLEMICS

The level of discussion and debate today is so low that it is impossible to make any sense out of anything. Name-calling, ranting, cliché-mongering, argument by assertion, excommunication, posturing, appeals to one's radicalism or one's fear of radicalism — all these expressions of contempt for intellectual discourse have become the standard modes of disagreement. There are complex reasons, of course, but I think the main ones are the breakup of the old intellectual communities and the emergence of new figures and movements, wild, sprawling, dissident, chaotic. Everyone is busy taking sides, bouncing from issue to issue, frantically looking for solutions that aren't there. And as soon as two people get together they are polarized.

Going to extremes, that old American custom, has taken over: no sooner is a new idea or movement born than it develops a lunatic fringe, and it doesn't take long for the fringe to be mistaken for the center—or to become the center. And then there is the bad faith of those who claim to be defending civilization against the extremists when they are really just protecting their investments.

Some random examples, in no special order:

*The Greening of America.* It's hard to understand the success of a book so full of truisms and false hopes. Its best parts are simply a rehash of radical theories and criticisms of existing society, presented with a breathlessness and innocence that gives them the air of fresh discovery. The rest is a compendium of fashionable notions about youth culture and the new radicalism, all lumped together into one huge historical package. Perhaps Reich's success is due to the fact that he has concocted a soothing mixture for both radicals and liberals: his prescription for the new society involves little pain, less effort, and above all, no revolution. Even the style is simple and declarative, in keeping with the author's evident sincerity. It's the old wave of the future, with consciousness filling in for determinism.

*Old and New Polemics.* An old form of political polemic which proves its case simply by asserting it is being revived. For example: a

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one-dimensional, over-simplified piece by Dennis Wrong in a recent issue of *Commentary* ostensibly presenting a capsule history of New York intellectual life. Most of its fire is directed against the *New York Review of Books,* though many people get a going over and *PR* too is accused of deviating from an arbitrary political norm that is somewhat hazy but turns out to be right of center. True, many of the things Wrong said were right. But much of his argument rests on ignoring the differences between diverse people and positions, on a hasty disposal of complicated questions, particularly literary ones, and on a vague, underlying assumption that all forms of radicalism amount to intellectual betrayal. In this respect, Wrong's piece is typical of the new conservative polemics — it raises questions only about the left, not about the right, not about the state of the country, which is presumably what the left is responding to. The ideological justification for this kind of argument is the belief that the left is the main threat, an appraisal that exaggerates the power of the puny left and minimizes the massive power of big business, the force of backward and provincial opinion throughout the country and the strength of various arms of the government.

*The Vietnam Riddle.* A number of commentators have pointed out how mad the Indo-Chinese expedition is even from the point of view of the Pentagon and the Administration — so mad it sometimes seems to lack the logic of madness. It's surprising, though, how restrained the far right has been in exploiting the dilemma of the government. (The Calley case may be the signal it has been waiting for.) For if the Asian communists must be stopped, if the war is justifiable, then Washington could be accused of betraying the national interest in not going all out. Its plight is that it plunged into a war it cannot "win," because of its fear of escalation and its failure to comprehend the political situation in Indo-China, yet one it thinks it cannot afford to lose. Hence the dragging on of the war is not just a blunder that the government is committed to but a predicament that it is trapped in by its continued policies of equivocation. The future of the country depends on whether this kind of political stupidity is accidental or built into the system.

*Conservatism is Catching.* As if to prove the instability of thinking in this country the pendulum swings back and forth every few years. Recently there have been a number of attacks, some quite venomous, on the youth, the students, the left, and on newer trends in writing and painting, all part of a cultural swing to the right mostly on the part of middle-aged writers with special attachments to some period or movement in the past. It has been argued that this turn is of little significance, that it represents mainly the disgruntlement of a few aging people who refuse to face the present. But I think it is a symptom of something deeper. And, regardless of how much weight history eventually will assign to it, it does have an immediate importance, if for no other reason than that people are infected by what's in the air. Hence you

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can't refute the new conservatism the way you would a legitimate argument. In a recent review in *The New York Times,* Christopher Lehmann-Haupt, who is a very intelligent reviewer, made the point that responsive people are bound to be in the middle — between the new and the old — because we have something of each in our thinking. This is, of course, true, except for the new conservatives, who, like the most extreme of the new radicals, are concerned with only one side of the equation. For, despite their protestations that they are attempting to restore the balance between the past and the present, the new conservatives are actually using earlier positions and ideologies to assault the very idea of change and experiment.

For example, one of the symptoms of the new cultural conservatism is the argument that today's avant-garde is really a perversion of "modernism." But arguing this way is just clinging to *earlier* forms of modernism, unless — and this would mean hiding literary differences behind a verbal quibble — we limit the term "modernism" to the earlier period. There should be no difficulty in granting the monumental work of figures like Joyce, Kafka, and Eliot, whom we identify with the modernist surge of the early part of the century, without being fixated on them, without, that is, assuming that no further experiments or developments can come out of the modernist spirit. No one who lives in the present but has a sense of the past argues that everything being written today is as good as the great works of the earlier period, or even that everything being written today is good. Nor does anyone with a historic sense deny that the contemporary scene, like every period, is full of mindless, disruptive, arrogant, futile postures and works. But there are intelligent younger writers and thinkers; and there is a genuine concern for the quality not only of our art but also of our life among the best of the younger people; and the issue is really whether they too are to be dismissed in a wholesale condemnation of the "post-modernist era," that is, of everything going on today. As always, the critical job is to distinguish between genuine talent and experiment and those who trade on novelty and dissidence.

To use the past as a club against the present is to freeze the values of the past, to transform the achievements of modernism into historical showpieces, putting them out of reach of those to whom they might be live forces and examples for their own work. If figures like Joyce, Kafka, Eliot, Picasso have a meaning for us, it is because of their peculiar combination of restlessness, morbidity, and playfulness, of generalization and fragmentation, that we associate with the quality of modern life and art. They are certainly not the models of balance, moderation, sanity, and structural solidity they are made out to be by those who regard a change of sensibility as a sign of cultural barbarism. Of course, there is a more complex aspect of the question: namely that an older writer cannot authentically assume a younger sensibility. But that is no reason for him to assume that history stopped the minute he was born.

It is certainly discouraging to argue these questions over and over again. Has everyone forgotten that the innovations of the twenties were thought to be nihilist and that the abstract expressionist painters were

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dismissed as undisciplined and self-indulgent by the frightened defenders of the true modern tradition?

*One Issue Politics.* One of the symptoms of intellectual breakdown is the inability to see things as part of a total scene. Individuals and movements become fixed on a single target, usually to the exclusion of everything else. Thus the obsessive and exclusive concern with — for or against — Vietnam, pollution, Black rights, women's lib, youth, drugs, etc. Some people can see nonsense only on the right, others only on the left. As though this were not absurd enough, we are all familiar with the reduction of the absurd *ad absurdum* which focuses not merely on one issue but on only one aspect of it: one trend, one organization, one publication. Do we need to be reminded that a distinguishing trait of crackpots is the inability to generalize?

*Women's Lib.* The hottest, and touchiest, issue today is women's lib. Nobody can quarrel with its aims. But what do you do with its nutty fringes, with the celebration of masturbation and lesbianism, with its man-baiting, its cultism, and all the ideological meanings that have been squeezed out of the shape of the vagina and the exact site of the orgasm? I suspect that the exotic questions have taken over quickly, because questions like equal rights and opportunities are not so modish and require low-keyed, dull, plodding, humdrum work. All that smacks of namby-pamby liberalism while the orgasm has all the explosive resonances of revolution.

On the other hand, those who are always ready to pounce on any sign of weakness or foolishness on the left are using the sexist extravaganzas to dismiss women's lib as a whole. I guess one can recognize women's lib's enemies, open or concealed, for what they are. But some of its friends make it difficult to remember that you are really for it.

*Educational Recipes.* Education experts are probably more polarized than any others. On the one hand, there are the standpatters who act as if education has been destroyed by the students, and as though inflated costs, fund-cuts, Agnewesque attacks on intellectuals, the smugness and inertia of middle academia, and mass education have had nothing to do with it. On the other side, speaking in the name of freedom, enlightenment and revolution are the nouveau-Rousseauists, whose position when you dig through the rhetoric of human fulfillment is not so new. It's the same old progressive notion of the student as gifted savage.

The new educational crusaders all agree on one thing: that the wrong subjects and wrong values are taught by the wrong teachers, particularly in the colleges which, they claim, are cluttered with the ghosts of the past, and that historical knowledge has been frozen into the bureaucratic mind of the academy. There is some truth to the

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charges. Only an apologist for old academic routines can deny that English studies needs to be revised. But, this is not to say that the past is to be given up in a splurge of historical masochism, or that it is to be taught in a gimmicky fashion to satisfy an improvised principle of relevance.

Of course, it is difficult to talk about "relevance" because the term has been so sloganized, and has led to simple-minded and ingenious correlations of older figures to current events and fashionable causes. Obviously in some sense relevance is relevant to the act of writing and the study of literature, as it is to thinking in any field. After all, as T. S. Eliot pointed out, the past is not fixed; it is constantly reshaped by new ideas and new works. In this sense, the past is a retroactive version of our engagement in the present — cranky, biased, very selective.

If such a view of the past were applied to teaching, it would mean abandoning many academic conventions based on the idea that literature is a self-perpetuating body of knowledge, which can be taught once it has been sorted out by qualified experts. The more scholarly teachers think of literature as a museum with walls stocked with works to be studied and rearranged, the more literary ones as a gourmet shop in which to cultivate one's tastes. But for both literature is identical with its history. (Comparative literature departments, which sound more sophisticated, have their own baroque mystiques for correlating and extracting aesthetic juice.)

Those of us who teach often forget that the whole academic enterprise is a vast, semi-autotelic system, with its own conventions and traditions that are not the same thing as critical thinking — a kind of academic counterculture. True, the teacher is affected by currents from the outside. But he assimilates them into the business of teaching and studying literature, so that while the body of teaching and learning cannot be said to be totally independent of literature itself, it does develop its own rules and intellectual habits. What it does is to isolate thinking about literature from writing. The best example of this process — or state of mind — is to be seen in Northrop Frye. Mr. Frye does not represent the academic unconscious; he set out to construct a paradigm for the academic approach to literature, freed from the battle-scarred critical polemics of the literary marketplace. Frye may go too far for some, but his dismissal of "literary taste" and "opinion," which includes all non-academic criticism, is essentially a justification of a self-enclosed intellectual apparatus. But to give Frye his due: he is probably the best academic critic today, and not always bound by the limitations of his scheme. Much of the other criticism coming out of the universities, lacking Frye's architectural vision, is little more than an accomplished deployment of current academic assumptions.

Leavis once said that you cannot teach literature without critical values, that is, without a critical mind. Otherwise you are teaching someone else's appreciations. And our graduate schools, through their emphasis on vocational training, standardize and transmit secondhand

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evaluations to each new generation of students. But even if we assume that judgment rather than knowledge should be the aim of English studies, the question remains how to translate live critical thinking into a curriculum. As with so many other questions, some of the difficulty comes from the fact that the way we see the problem rests on assumptions that themselves need questioning. But to reexamine the things we take for granted about education is harder than to sound off about culture, counterculture, and the liberation of the mind from learning.

It's not all just a question of intellectual tone, though that's not something we should be too quick to dismiss. It goes deeper. We're angry, we're frustrated, we're righteous, and we can't talk to each other anymore. In this situation, polemics are simply thwarted politics.

**W. P.**

P.S. A notable exception to all this: I am reminded by an interview with Hannah Arendt I have just read that there is at least one speculative mind still around: bold, free-wheeling, not looking to fashionable opinion but with an eye for the current scene, never petty and always on the level of the subject. It's not her conclusions that matter; it's the freedom from contemporary cant — left and right — the universal language of those who know the solutions before they understand the problems. Miss Arendt is a unique, anomalous figure. She belongs to a time of strong thinkers and large theories, but could have a needed influence today. For though she is not herself a radical, in the usual sense of the term, the left could use some of her intellectual temper.

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Peter Weiss

# TROTSKY IN EXILE

## ACT ONE

*The basic scene is a room that could be anywhere, with a writing desk covered with papers and books, a camp bed, trunks and packing cases and a few widely spaced chairs.*

TROTSKY *is seated at the writing desk reading a manuscript, pen in hand. This picture is repeated at various points during the play. It corresponds to the final moments of the play.*

*Various stages of Trotsky's life are depicted against this unchanging scene: periods of exile, meetings and disputes with key figures in the revolution. The beginning is explained by the end, which shows Trotsky, in retirement and isolation, just before his death. The actors' entrances are swift and sudden.*

### 2. THE PENAL COLONY OF VERKHOLENSK

MRACHKOVSKY, DZERZHINSKY, MAKHAISKY, LUZIN, ALEXANDRA SOKOLOVSKAYA *and other nameless prisoners come in.* ALEXANDRA *proceeds to make up a bed of blankets and furs.* TROTSKY *is at the desk.*

TROTSKY: My fellow prisoners. Sometimes Natasha. Sometimes Alexandra. Exile. Banished by my own people. Banished by the Czar. Siberia. Nearly thirty years ago. A new century was beginning. (*He brushes a hand over an open book*) Cockroaches are reading Marx. Cockroaches eating *Das Kapital.* Alexandra, how are the children?

ALEXANDRA: Zina is asleep. Ninushka still feverish.

DZERZHINSKY: The new century. Signs of the coming storm. Awful portents. Russia. What a huge factory of ideas. And what despotism. Court, nobility, landowners, officers, overseers, foremen, police. Patriarchs all. Absolute power in the family. Over children, grandchildren. We must break it. But where are the free men to come from?

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PRISONER 1: Is that right what they say in the *Iskra?* Workers can't rebel on their own. Need leadership. So the intellectuals must plan it for them.

PRISONER 2: Revolution starts in the streets.

PRISONER 1: Our planners. Local heroes. Students. Go out to the suburbs. Collect a few workers. Try to tell us how to take over our own factories. And don't know one end of a machine from the other.

MRACHKOVSKY: Yet everything grinds to a halt the moment the students are arrested. Or even go off on holiday. Not a murmur from below.

PRISONER 1: A handful of wise guys. What good have they ever done us? Churning out a few socialist ideas of their own. They haven't got through to the masses.

TROTSKY: You're suspicious of the students. It's true, they come from the middle classes. Where else? They're the only ones with the means and the time to read and learn. The worker sweats out his eleven or twelve hours a day. At the end has no energy left for learning. But think what is really happening. For the first time students are not using their knowledge to get themselves a comfortable place among their own class. They're turning it against the society that raised them. A bourgeois revolution beginning. Students taking sides with the workers. That means they're prepared to go on to the next stage, to the revolution of the proletariat. That's why we need political leadership, a party. To push *this* revolution on, to secure power for the workers.

PRISONER 1: You're still intellectuals. How many workers read your poems, Dzerzhinsky? Do they read your learned tracts, Bronstein?

DZERZHINSKY: What does it matter where revolutionaries come from? In the struggle for a classless society they soon learn to forget their families. And one day it will be the sons and daughters of the workers who go to the universities.

ALEXANDRA: What have you got against intellectuals? Aren't they shut up here too in Verkholensk? Isn't it work to print and distribute illegal pamphlets? To agitate? To build an organization?

MAKHAISKY: Organization is the beginning of the end.

TROTSKY: The strikes — they show the fight has really begun. But economic struggle isn't political struggle. The individual cells inside the factories must be brought together.

MAKHAISKY: And that puts an end to spontaneous movement. Look at Germany: it's the party that's strong there. A bunch of opportunists, starting with their Bernstein. No power for the workers, but alliance with the middle class. Not revolution, but liberalism.

LUZIN: All those theorizers sitting outside. Plekhanov, Axelrod, Martov,

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Lenin. Telling everybody revolution must begin in the industrial states. This is where it will begin. Here in medieval, Asiatic Russia.

TROTSKY: Spontaneity is not enough, Makhaisky. Spontaneity is rebellion born of rage, despair, hunger. That is not what we mean by revolution. Risings of that kind went out with the Paris Commune. They help nobody but the bourgeoisie. Not because *they* are revolutionaries, but because they're what they are. They've got their hands on property, on schools, the press, the army. We could mount the barricades, yes. But what we really need is a general strike, mass meetings, demonstrations. And the army. Without the army on our side nothing will be achieved in our lifetime.

MAKHAISKY: With the old state creaking in every joint? Shoot a minister and the Czar shivers with fright.

TROTSKY: Our concern is not killing ministers, but the total destruction of the monarchy.

MAKHAISKY: A party of the kind you want will be just a new form of tyranny. A chosen few — officials, technicians, scientists — fleecing the proletariat. Maybe you talk now of abolishing the state. But you'll forget all that when you have your own instrument of power. We must go on as we began — to smash the state, its institutions and its bureaucracy.

TROTSKY: Language of the past century, Makhaisky. Progress lies with the researchers, the mathematicians, the administrators.

LUZIN: Once people see what's good for them, the power problem is solved. We don't need a central committee to show them that.

MAKHAISKY: We must fight the state with the same weapons it uses against us. Terrorize the fat bosses, the greedy moneybags, the governmental gasbags. Terrorize the conformists. Then they'll show us what they're really like. Everyone will recognize their ugly mugs.

LUZIN: We don't need the army. Bombs are easy to make. A bit of nitric acid, a bit of potassium chlorate in a bottle, and the law courts, the barracks, the Bank of Russia go up in flames.

TROTSKY: Your explosives are no substitute for the masses, Luzin. Some of you will get burned, die your individual hero's deaths. But you won't win the workers to your side.

### 3. LONDON

TROTSKY: London. Nineteen hundred and two. Ten Holford Place.

NADEZHDA KRUPSKAYA *appears.*

NADEZHDA: Hardly the time for visits.

TROTSKY: Yes, it's very early. But it took me three months to get here. I can't wait now.

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NADEZHDA: Vladimir Ilyich, the Pen has arrived.

TROTSKY: Nadezhda Krupskaya, the cabman's outside. I had no money to pay him.

NADEZHDA KRUPSKAYA *goes off.* LENIN *comes in and goes quickly to the desk.* TROTSKY *goes to meet him. Both sit down, and the conversation begins at once.*

The question is being asked all over Russia: what should the party do? Is it to think, decide and act for the proletariat? The workers say nobody can tell them how to run their factories. Once the owners are wiped out, they'll set up their own organization.

LENIN: Hm. They can form trade unions. Can force the management into improving their conditions. But the irreconcilable differences between their interests and the system as a whole — that they will have to be shown from outside.

TROTSKY: They'll tolerate no party that tries to run them. They're already strong enough to impose conditions on society. The middle classes are brutal, greedy. But cowards. The proletariat will swamp the bourgeois revolution.

LENIN: Hm. How old are you?

TROTSKY: Twenty-three.

LENIN: Lev Davidovich, you're trying to cut corners. You're impatient. For Russia a bourgeois revolution is the necessary first step. To break down feudalism. Put through land reforms. We need a democratic republic before the working class can mobilize, prepare for battle. It's still a minority. Must join hands with the semiproletariat, the peasants.

TROTSKY: It's too late now for a bourgeois revolution in Russia. The proletariat is ready to go. We can't wait for the capitalist stage to be developed. Wouldn't any way bring it up to European standards. In backward countries democracy can be achieved only through the workers.

LENIN: At this stage a revolutionary government in Russia could only be a coalition of parties. Even then the socialists would be a minority. Extremely dangerous, your illusions.

TROTSKY: We must go out for socialist revolution from the very start. For the dictatorship of the proletariat. Without letting up. Until our attacks flood out and infect the movement in other countries.

LENIN: Lev Davidovich. You are called the Pen because you express your thoughts quickly and easily. We need you for the *Iskra.* To put over from here the ideas which will lead in time to revolution. But revolutionaries who cannot move slowly and patiently are bad revolutionaries. Anyone can be a revolutionary once revolution has broken out. Much more difficult and more valuable to be a revolu-

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tionary when conditions for open battle don't yet exist. Further. Revolutionary tactics must be based on a strictly objective evaluation of the strength of all social classes. Years of disciplined work underground.

TROTSKY: We must keep moving on a broad front. Try out our own strength.

LENIN: Amateurism. The reputation of our revolutionaries in Russia is being lost through amateurishness. Sloppy and shaky on theory. Narrow-minded. Hiding their own deficiencies under talk of the inherent strength of the masses. Unable to work to an overall plan. Losing precious time in argument. Each in love with his own ideas. Vulnerable to the political police. Split wide open in every successive raid. (*He rises, pressing a hand to his forehead*) Give us an organization of professional revolutionaries, and we shall turn Russia upside down.

TROTSKY *also rises.* LENIN *presses both hands to his temples.*

TROTSKY: Are you ill, Vladimir Ilyich?

LENIN: Come. Let's get on.

## 7. ZURICH

LENIN *is seated at back on a chair,* TROTSKY *stretched out on the camp bed.* RADEK, RAKOVSKY, INESSA ARMAND *enter.*

INESSA: Parvus is here, Ilyich. Insists on seeing you.

RADEK: Comes among the refugees like God Almighty. To give us alms. Living in a suite in the Baur au Lac on champagne and fat cigars. Has a harem of blonde concubines.

LENIN: That opportunist. That German socialistic chauvinist. I won't see him. What news from Petrograd, Radek?

RADEK: No bread, no coal. But Faberget the court jeweler is doing a fabulous trade. Countess Vyrubova boasts she has never bought so many clothes and jewels in a single season as this winter. The night clubs are stuffed with staff officers, members of parliament, theatrical managers, ballerinas, generals and other illustrious humbugs. It's a real orgy, a shower of gold on a plague. The aristocrats drinking to the muzhiks they've shipped off to fight in Galicia.

PARVUS *comes in, wearing an open fur coat, tophat in hand.*

PARVUS: Comrade Lenin, I can help you to mobilize a hundred thousand Russian workers and call out a general strike.

LENIN: We don't work with agents of the German government.

PARVUS: You know I support the Russian revolution.

LENIN: As imperialists now and again support revolutionaries and na-

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tional liberation movements. Even rebellion can be made to yield profits.

PARVUS: Vladimir Ilyich, you should be able to appreciate my tactics. I'm exploiting the situation in imperial Germany. Capitalism shall be invited to dig its own grave.

LENIN: I know your plans, Parvus. A niche for yourself as reformer and savior of the Russian revolution. Go away. Tell your foreign ministry we are not for sale.

PARVUS: If you imagine the German proletariat is thinking of revolution, you're deluding yourself. I tell you, there'll be no revolution in Germany as long as the war lasts. That can happen only in Russia. I can let you have a million roubles at once.

LENIN: Get out. Don't come near me again.

PARVUS: I despise political outcasts who starve for their ideals. What sort of a life is this? Living in filthy rooms. In attics. You, Lenin, sleep on top of a sausage factory. I know, the stink of rotting flesh makes you mad. But hold on. Hold on.

PARVUS *goes off.* TROTSKY, *who has been lying on the camp bed, sits up.* LENIN *comes forward.*

LENIN: Scoundrel. Traitor. An awful example of the collapse of the second International.

RADEK *laughs.*

RADEK: Profiteer. Speculator. But he's got twenty million Swiss francs in his pocket. We'll need him one day.

RAKOVSKY: We shouldn't mistrust him. He's smuggled a lot of comrades through Germany. He thinks all problems can be solved with money. Maybe he's right. He's the only one who can help us get back home when the time comes.

LENIN: Certainly we need clever people, Rakovsky. But they must have clean hands.

RADEK *regards his hands, laughing.*

RADEK: Have we got clean hands? Haven't we robbed mail coaches and trains, raided banks, dispossessed tradesmen and factory owners? Revolution eats money. Haven't we fought side by side with bandits and sat with them in prison cells? Did we ever ask who was with us setting traps or laying bombs? Haven't rogues and pimps and thieves gone to the gallows singing the Red Flag? Don't the social outcasts belong to us too? The lowest of the low? Wasn't it you, Vladimir Ilyich, who laughed at Rosa when she complained of the brutality we thought necessary? Remember Parvus when we come to power, when we make treaties and alliances with German, French, British and American supergangsters.

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*Enter a group of writers and artists — regulars at the public house at the corner of the Spiegelgasse, founders of the Cafe Voltaire and the Dadaists:* EMMY HENNINGS, HUGO BALL, TRISTAN TZARA, MARCEL JANCO, RICHARD HUELSENBECK *and their protegee* ANNA BLUME.

HENNINGS: All the rebels gathered in our little saloon. Radek, Lenin. And Trotsky. I hear you're still living opposite, Monsieur Lenin. Because your landlady said the soldiers must now turn their guns on their own governments. The news has got around.

BALL: Do you still believe in European culture, Trotsky? Your harmonious arches, your idealistic steeples? I've read all your edicts on art and poetry. Haven't you seen yet that all the splendid facades are cracking and crumbling?

TZARA: Tristan Tzara, that's me, and Janco, and Emmy Hennings and Hugo Ball, and Richard Huelsenbeck, and Anna Blume, the streetwalker from the corner, and Max Ernst, and Duchamp in New York. Remember these names. An International. We'll go down in history too, like you. You say bourgeois values must be destroyed, we don't want to keep any of them, they must disappear, we'll begin again. That's our program too. We shall smash everything they built up. Down with the Venus de Milo. Down with the Sistine Madonna. Down with statues, temples, libraries, museums. Down with all this muck on pedestals, in frames, in glass cases. All lies. All hypocrisy. The real voice, that is heard in the clatter of the tanks, the rattle of shrapnel, the throbbing of airplanes. Groans, death rattles, farts, belches, howls. That is our language. Music? Is there still a place for music? Who listens to music with a knife in his ribs, a bullet in his guts?

HUGO BALL *climbs on a chair.*

BALL: You must join hands with us, you rationalists, you revolutionary technicians. You bring down the despots, the bloodsuckers in the banks and factories. We bring down the bosses who keep our impulses, our imagination, under lock and key. From the ruins the downtrodden working slave, the starved court jester will rise and generate an almighty force. We must unite. We, the unpredictable, emotional artists and you, the planners, the designers. Undivided. Or our revolution will trickle away into the sand. New man must be a creator. New art is life. Breathing is art. Movement is art. We swim in the air. We fly. Life is flying.

*He jumps from the chair with outstretched arms and falls flat. He is helped to his feet amid laughter.* TROTSKY *rises from the camp bed.*

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ANNA BLUME: I don't know what he means. Vladimir Ilyich told me that after the revolution the libraries and museums will belong to us, and the palaces and the theaters. So why should they be destroyed? Then they won't be any use to us any more.

JANCO: We don't need them. They were made only for the people up top, those who spit on your head. To whom you sold yourself by the hour. As we all do.

ANNA BLUME: But I want to see them. I want to go inside.

LENIN: Yes. These things have split society. Yes. They have served the ruling class. But we have learned to make use of them. We have gained knowledge from them. They have helped us to develop skills. To go beyond our limits. The pseudorevolutionaries, they can afford to destroy our cultural heritage. They have had more than their fill of it. But we, we still need it. We wish to take it over whole. The people who have so far been cut off from it, they shall decide what is to be thrown out, what can still be used.

HENNINGS: Nothing. Nothing can still be used. Not even by you, Anna. We must learn everything afresh. Bla bla bla. Da da da. Dada. That's what the new art will be called. Antiart. Born in the Spiegelgasse in Zurich. In the Cafe Voltaire. In the year of blood. In the month of the spilling guts. On the day of the death scream. To the world. To the public of the world. The new culture, Dada, is born. Da da. Da da da. To the people of the future. To the visionaries. Let your clothes rot on your bodies. Dress yourselves in your own hair. Come and go like rain and fog. Da da. Da da da.

ANNA BLUME: What's she talking about, Inessa? Has she gone off her head?

BALL: No. She is the mouthpiece of the higher reason. Reason freed from the yoke of precedents and laws.

TROTSKY: We imagined once that the world would be governed by conscious knowledge, by critical thinking. But throughout history consciousness has tottered along behind the facts. To that extent you are right.

LENIN *is suddenly violently angry. All turn to him in concern.*

LENIN: And just because human intelligence is so puny, for the very reason that it is so puny, that is why I shall never permit its weak glow to be extinguished.

*A moment of silence.* LENIN *walks agitatedly to and fro.*

TROTSKY: All these great happenings everywhere. These shocks and upsets. They must produce a new form of art. A change in the social pattern must free the artist too from his old restraints.

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HUELSENBECK: It will be a shock course. Things irrational, things so far concealed, things never before defined in words and symbols shall find expression.

TROTSKY: But not in an ecstatic, mystical way. Art must help to change the world. An art freed from the clutches of agents, speculators, profiteers. The new art which belongs to all must serve the revolution.

HUELSENBECK: And return to captivity? Art must belong to nobody but itself.

LENIN: Art has no right to absolute freedom. Art must take sides. We shall come down heavily against artistic self-sufficiency. Against any sort of ridicule, vulgarity, cynicism, hate directed against us under the cloak of creative genius.

HUELSENBECK: You take art much too seriously. You still believe in the great works.

TROTSKY: One single great work. Produced collectively. It will come. First in a vast muddle of stylistic experiments, exaggerations, aberrations. Much of it formless, flat, rough, inexpert. Echoes of the past. Utopian dreams. Most of it worthless, quickly thrown aside. But within it we shall see the path along which new man is progressing.

INESSA: But who's to judge whether it is revolutionary art? Who decides what is harmed and what is helped by it? Where is the limit? Who decides where to intervene?

LENIN: The proletariat will fix the standards.

RAKOVSKY: And what will the proletariat say to our progressives? Have you seen the pictures of Malevich, Kandinsky, Chagall, Tatlin, Lissitzky? Do you know the poems of Blok, of Mayakovsky? And all the things happening in the theater? Meyerhold, Vachtangov, Tairov. Will the workers see that as revolutionary art?

LENIN: Once libraries, museums, schools, universities are in the hands of the people, a proletarian culture will emerge, and with it proletarian art. And since the workers will want to study, to learn, to explore, to educate themselves, they will expect a lot from their artists. They will have no taste for empty magic. Their art will be realistic and scientific.

TROTSKY: What we are visualizing, what is already beginning to emerge, will that ever be proletarian culture? Can there be a proletarian culture at all? Before us years of revolution, civil war, bitter class warfare. Art will join in the fight, yes. But the proletariat, it will need all its strength to seize power, to maintain it and use it. Culture will mean to start with hundreds of millions of people learning to read and write and do their sums. In a socialist society the proletariat will

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cease to be the proletariat. The revolution will put an end to class culture. What will come is mass art, communal art, that is to say, classless art.

TRISTAN TZARA *pulls* ANNA BLUME *to the back.*

TZARA: Brothers, sisters. Let us storm the marble halls, the crematoria of the spirit. Out with the starch-shirted busts, the laurel wreaths. In with the roofless. The armless, the legless.

BALL: The headless.

ANNA BLUME *turns towards* LENIN.

ANNA BLUME: Ilyich. Ilyich.

*She is pulled off by* TRISTAN TZARA. *The whole group follows them, laughing and imitating trumpet calls.* INESSA ARMAND, RADEK *and* RAKOVSKY *join them. All go off. Only* LENIN *and* TROTSKY *remain.* LENIN *presses his temples with both hands.*

TROTSKY: The doctor ordered you rest. Relaxation. Walks.

LENIN: Hm. Holidays? We need every hour.

LENIN *goes to the camp bed and lies down.*

Haven't time now even to listen to Inessa playing. The *Appassionata.* Ha. Ha ha ha. What wonderful things human beings can think up. But I can't listen. Music affects the nerves. One wants to say nice sweet things, stroke people's hair. Ha. Ha ha ha. To think such beautiful thoughts, while they are living in hell. I can't bear it. No, stroke them, and they bite off your hand. Beat them on the head, that's what one must do.

TROTSKY: Vladimir Ilyich, one must relax sometimes. When were you in Copenhagen with Inessa Armand? How many years ago?

LENIN: In nineteen ten. September. For ten days.

TROTSKY: And that is all?

LENIN *laughs.*

LENIN: Piano-playing. A walk. A hotel room. That sort of thing is quickly over. Leaves no traces.

TROTSKY: Live just for the revolution. Day and night. Firm. Clear. Spotless. Exemplary.

LENIN: The work must be done. (*He puts his hands to his head*)

TROTSKY: You had no sleep last night, I know. Yet up in the morning laughing. Ha ha ha, how are you, what's new? How do you do it? I know your nerves are upset. Chest, hips. Your whole body inflamed. Rashes. Eczema. How can you stand it?

LENIN: It's not important.

TROTSKY: Not important? The body. Feel it all the time. Stomach. Intestines. Heart. Kidneys. These functions often claim my attention for days on end. Growing old. The beginning of death. Time. I

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thought of that even as a child. Saw it once as something long, like the stone step outside the house. Chronology. Counting. Time is formless. Has no shape till you begin to count. Sometimes I wake up sobbing. Terribly disturbed. Like falling through a strange door. Into a room you don't know. An odd light. Echoing voices. This searching for connections. Books. Unknown words. References you don't understand. Everything at times like on a huge stage. When I first went to a theater, Ilyich, it was overwhelming. Indescribable. Out of my mind nearly at what was going on. Sat through all the intervals in case I might miss something. Afterward they asked me: what did you see? I couldn't say. What had I seen? What had I seen?

LENIN *is lying motionless on the camp bed.* FOUR SOLDIERS *come in, as before, dressed in Red Army uniforms. They march to the bed, lift* LENIN *up and carry him off at back.*

## 8. TWENTY-FIFTH OF OCTOBER

*A crowd of workers, sailors, soldiers come slowly forward. Torn clothing, muddy military coats, head scarves, heavy fur caps, rifles on shoulders, belts with ammunition pouches. They take* TROTSKY *up in their midst and lead him forward.*

TROTSKY: There in their houses, there they're sitting now. The bourgeoisie. Huddled together. Listening. Trying to guess what is happening in the dangerous streets. Officials still writing out regulations which will never be read again. Schoolchildren sitting over books long out of date. Poets sweating on verses which no one will read. Not a sound. They expected barricades. Fires. Looting. Streams of blood. But all is quiet. They can't understand it. Why is everything so terribly quiet? There they sit. Before us. Slowly we have crept up on them. They don't yet know. We needed no loud calls to bring us together. We've come from the workshops, the factories. From the ships. From the front. They pant and sweat a little. But prefer not to see us yet. They can't accept that we, who always stood at the back, miles behind, invisible, we are now at the front, right on top of them. We have been preparing. For years. Now we are showing ourselves. We shall force them to see us. They start to tremble.

*The gathering moves slowly back. A part goes off. Others remain as sentries, messengers, members of the Red Guard. A few stretch out on the floor to sleep. A telephone is manned. Bread and sausages are brought, a can of tea.*

*Enter* LENIN, DZERZHINSKY, KAMENEV, RAKOVSKY, SVERDLOV, SMIRNOV, SHLYAPNIKOV, POZNANSKY, MRACHKOVSKY. TROTSKY *sits down at one edge of the desk,* LENIN *at the other. There is a*

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*constant coming and going. Notes are written, handed over. Soldiers, sailors come in with reports, go off with orders.*

DZERZHINSKY: The aristocratic daughters of Smolny never dreamed that the revolution would be led from here. On the door outside it says "Class Mistress."

SOLDIER 1: Now there's another class here.

TROTSKY: How are the occupations going, Dzerzhinsky?

DZERZHINSKY: The Kexholm regiment is holding the telegraph office. Two men at the main counter. That was enough. The clerks saw who's in charge now.

TROTSKY: The telephone exchange?

SAILOR 1: A proper racket when we got there with our troops. Telephone girls in hysterics, waving their arms. What's the matter, lassies, d'you think we want to shoot you? You can all go. We can work it by ourselves. And off they went. The whole Morskaya street full of screeching hats and coats.

*Laughter. A soldier to* MRACHKOVSKY.

MRACHKOVSKY: Electricity works, water works, main post office, all secured. Reliable guards.

SAILOR 2: The *Aurora* is now at anchor at the Nikolaevsky bridge. We've let the bridge down. Secured the crossing. A few tanks about. No sign of the junkers.

TROTSKY: How are things at the Peter and Paul fortress?

SAILOR 2: They've got eighty machine guns. Control the quay and the Troizky bridge. A few comrades out stirring things up in the bicycle batallion. Typical people on wheels, most of them from the upper regions.

SHLYAPNIKOV: We've taken the railway stations without a shot fired. The pioneers were there. Slid off once it got dark. Bubnov's in contact with the railway workers. Miliutin is seeing the food supplies through.

TROTSKY: And the state bank?

DZERZHINSKY: Detachment of marines, forty men, on their way.

WORKER 1 (*to telephone operator*): Come on, we're waiting. Still no news from the arms factory? The Red Guard needs rifles.

TEL. OPERATOR: I'm through now. You can go down. Five thousand rifles with ammunition boxes. Get a requisition from Trotsky.

*Two heavily armed sailors enter.*

SAILOR 3: We've occupied the state bank.

RAKOVSKY: The holiest of holies.

SAILOR 3: A section of Kadets at the Yekaterinsky canal. Just goggled when they saw us. We've been sent to guard the bank, we said. They

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let us through without lifting a finger. So in we went. The doors weren't even locked. We put a guard on every phone.

SAILOR 4: You should have seen the bank people. Where have you got your gold? Just a little tap with a bayonet and they whipped out the keys. Then down the stairs to the vaults.

RAKOVSKY: And?

SAILOR 4: Gold bars lying there like cakes in the oven.

RAKOVSKY: That's more than the Paris Commune dared to do.

ANTONOV *enters. He reports to* TROTSKY. LENIN *meanwhile consults papers and makes notes.*

ANTONOV: The Winter Palace is surrounded. Blockade closing in on the Admiralty quay, Nevsky Prospect, Mars Field, Palace quay. We're stationed at the railing and moats of the Hermitage. All gates to the Palace Gardens in our hands. We advanced to the main entrance, disarmed the guards. The Kadets have entrenched themselves behind wooden stakes. Firewood. Have received reinforcements. A women's batallion. The *Aurora*'s waiting for a signal from the fortress. Blanks first, as agreed. Then, if necessary, fire.

TROTSKY: Kamenev's and Zinoviev's declaration could be useful to us. It'll strengthen Kerensky's opinion that we're not yet ready to strike, are willing to negotiate. Our tactics so far have been to make all our preparations look like security measures. Against a counterrevolution from the right. All we need now, Antonov, is an act of provocation. Then attack becomes defense.

ANTONOV: In the palace they're reeling around like hypnotized chickens. We sent up patrols from the cellars. The government's taken refuge in the throne room. Behind each one an old footman in livery, filling up glasses.

*A* FEMALE WORKER *and a* PRINTING WORKER *come in hurriedly.*

FEM. WORKER: We were printing off *Pravda* when a troop of junkers came in. They swept the galleys off the table with their rifles, smashed the matrices. We were forced out, the doors locked and sealed. Give us an armed escort and we promise to get the paper out.

TROTSKY: Official seals on the doors of the Bolshevik newspaper. The signal for battle. Immediate order to the Litovsk regiment. A company to protect the workers' press.

PRINTING WORKER: Get some from the sixth pioneer batallion too. They're neighbors, good friends of ours.

TROTSKY *writes some notes and gives them to a messenger.*

TROTSKY: Antonov, raise the red lantern on the Peter and Paul fortress.

ANTONOV *goes off.*

Poznansky, write this down. Order Number One. The Petrograd soviet

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is in danger. Counterrevolutionary rioters, junkers and assault troops are preparing an offensive. Take up action stations and await further instructions. Disobedience or delay in carrying out orders will be regarded as betrayal of the revolutionary cause.

POZNANSKY *gives the written order to a soldier, who goes off with it.*

LENIN: Control of the press. The idea of dispensing with that comes from the same sort of people who think a coalition with the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries still possible. What nonsense these democrats talk, even the most left-wing ones, about the freedom of the press. Why do the liberals want a free press? So they can slander us. The right to speak is less important than the right to live. First thing is to establish proletarian dictatorship over the press. The press is a weapon in the revolutionary struggle. All moral considerations must take second place.

SMIRNOV: In the city center, right beside the palace, people are out taking walks. It's unbelievable. The trams are running as usual, the restaurants are open, and the cinemas and theaters. I've just come from the Moyka. Walking around among the officers, coachmen, ladies dressed up in their finery, it made me feel like a dwarf trying to move a mountain. And on my way here I had my coat stolen. I thought at first it was a patrol. It was just a few youngsters.

TROTSKY: Where was that, Smirnov?

SMIRNOV: Here, just outside Smolny. They came up to me and said, Comrade, take your fur coat off, it's warmed you long enough, we're freezing. Quick, they said, off with it. I had to give it them.

*Laughter.*

TROTSKY: Poznansky, get this out immediately. All people creating disorder, looting, knifing or shooting in the streets of Petrograd will be tried by court martial and, if found guilty, summarily executed.

DZERZHINSKY: Just look at us. Gray faces. Unshaven. We'll lose the revolution if we don't get some sleep. Oh, for a bath, a clean shirt.

*A* FEMALE WORKER *in a soldier's greatcoat brings in a bowl of water and puts it down before* DZERZHINSKY. *He washes his face, fills his mouth with water, gargles, spits it out.* LENIN *rises, walks to and fro.*

LENIN: So soon after persecution, exile — power. It makes one giddy. (*He makes a circular movement with a hand around his head*) We must form a government. What shall we call ourselves? Not on any account ministers. Vile word.

SVERDLOV: Commissars, perhaps? But there are too many commissars already.

SMIRNOV: Chief commissars. Or People's Commissars.

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LENIN: People's Commissars. Hm. And the government as a whole?

TROTSKY: Soviet. Soviet of course. Soviet of People's Commissars.

LENIN: People's Commissars. Excellent. Smells frightfully of revolution. As chairman of the Council of People's Commissars I propose Comrade Trotsky.

TROTSKY: I beg leave to decline.

SVERDLOV: Trotsky was too long outside the party. He's been with us only a few months.

LENIN: There are no better Bolsheviks than Trotsky. He stands at the head of the Petrograd soviet. I state this categorically. There are no official records of these days. Only scribbled notes and verbal orders. None of us has time to write history. Who knows how many of us will still be here in the next weeks, months? Those who follow us will report incompletely, perhaps misrepresent. I put on record that Comrade Trotsky planned every step of the rebellion. He led the Petrograd soviet to victory.

TROTSKY: I would rather stay outside the government. Look after the party press.

LENIN: Take the commissariat for internal affairs. The fight against the counterrevolution is now the main task.

TROTSKY: Shall we give the enemy the extra weapon of saying I am a Jew?

LENIN: We are engaged in a great international revolution. What do such trifles matter?

TROTSKY: Maybe the revolution is great. But there are still fools enough about.

LENIN: Must we do things to suit them?

SMIRNOV: Lev Davidovich should be set to tackle Europe. He knows it. He should take over foreign affairs.

LENIN: Do you accept Smirnov's suggestion?

TROTSKY: With reluctance. What's there to do? I'll issue a few revolutionary proclamations to the peoples of the world and then shut up shop.

*A* SAILOR *in dirty uniform enters.*

SAILOR 2: In the Peter and Paul fortress the officer cadets first said they couldn't fire the guns. Rusted, compressors not oiled. And the crews vanished. Then a few marine artillerymen came up. No experience, but good Bolsheviks. They got the guns ready, can fire without oil. We couldn't find a red lantern. Lost a lot of time looking for one. But found it in the end. It's up. The *Aurora* has answered.

TROTSKY: Did you shoot?

SAILOR 2: Not necessary. The Winter Palace is ours.

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TROTSKY: Is that confirmed?

TEL. OPERATOR: Not yet. But Kerensky has bolted.

SOLDIER 2: The women are still under cover.

SVERDLOV: Comrades, in a few hours the congress will begin. Let's go into the chamber. Get things organized.

*Most go off. Only* LENIN *and* TROTSKY *remain at front. At back the telephone operator, and now and again messengers coming and going.* LENIN *lies down on the camp bed.* TROTSKY *stretches out on a row of chairs near him. A female worker puts a few military coats over them.*

LENIN: The people in the town still think the workers are incapable of running the state machinery. The old machinery. As if that were important. The machinery won't be taken over, nor adapted. It will be smashed. And what we put in its place, every worker will be able to run that.

## 9. TWENTY-SIXTH OF OCTOBER

TROTSKY: Yet all the same. Far too few workers in the government ranks. Far too many intellectuals, orators.

LENIN: You mistrust the party leadership?

TROTSKY: Vladimir Ilyich, you know your decisions are accepted by everybody. Sverdlov, Rykov, Bukharin, most of the others, they couldn't believe their ears when you talked in May of a proletarian revolution, no longer a middle-class democratic one. Many thought you'd gone mad, that exile had robbed you of your sense of reality.

LENIN: Said I'd become a Trotskyist. Ha. Ha ha ha.

TROTSKY: They jibbed for a while. Then came over to the new course. Kamenev, Zinoviev. We threatened to expel them, they threatened to resign. But they stayed on. All of them. Unity was preserved. The group leadership works. Because you are there. And because behind it is the real power. The workers, the soldiers.

LENIN: You think, if the White Guards were to kill you and me, the party would collapse?

TROTSKY: Let's hope they don't kill us.

LENIN: But if we weren't here? Do you think without us the October Revolution could never have taken place?

*They lie a few moments in silence.* SVERDLOV *comes in and looks at them, then withdraws.*

TROTSKY: Sometimes I think so. Sometimes not. In February the monarchy was simply swept away. In a huge outburst of energy. No leadership then. After that the short period of bourgeois rule. A provisional government with no links to the people. New initiatives from

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below. Isolated actions. Self-help. Setting up of advisory councils. Now we come along. Our achievement: to bring the innumerable spontaneous actions together. To merge them into the Bolshevik effort. We have the overall vision. See the immediate possibilities. Put into concrete form what was present in the raw. Restrict ourselves to a single military operation. Carried out by a limited number of Red Guards. The masses are not fighting now. Only the proletariat avant-garde. How many of us are there? Five thousand, ten thousand. History will remember the names of a few dozen. The millions of the nameless are now asking: will we do justice to all their efforts?

LENIN: And the quarrel between us? Over now?

TROTSKY: Was it a quarrel? Not rather a mutual testing of strength? We pushed each other forward. Took over each other's ideas. Ironed out differences of opinion. The revolution was still untried. Different views and possibilities had to clash and be proved in practice. In the future too there'll be controversy, contradictions. Would we be Marxists otherwise?

LENIN: Ha. Ha ha ha. My rage against you was often violent. Because you held fast to those false humanists. Were you trying to outplay me, perhaps? To grab the leadership yourself?

TROTSKY: Maybe the impulse was there. Somewhere in me there's still that poor young Jewish lad Lev Bronstein from Yanofska. This fantastic urge for power and influence. Difficult to appreciate that none of it exists for you. Ambition. The need to prove oneself. None of it exists for you.

LENIN: We are worthy of each other. But I've got only a few more years. There are times now when for an hour or so I am gone, blotted out. The others, they won't put up with you when I'm no longer here. Your self-assurance, your international interests. They'll call it arrogance, vanity. They'll band together and throw you out. Then we'll see what the revolutionary masses are worth. Whether they'll come out on your side.

*Machine-gun fire. Enter the participants at the all-Russian congress, among them* SVERDLOV, SMIRNOV, KAMENEV, ZINOVIEV, DZERZHINSKY, RYKOV, RAKOVSKY, SHLYAPNIKOV, MRACHKOVSKY, MARTOV, KHINCHUK, ABRAMOVICH, ARKADI KREMER, DEUTSCH, KUCHIN, PETERSON. *They sit down at and around the desk. It is a large gathering. A babble of voices.* TROTSKY, LENIN, KAMENEV, SVERDLOV *sit at the middle of the desk. A soldier gives* TROTSKY *a message.*

TROTSKY: In the name of the military revolutionary committee I declare that the provisional government has ceased to exist.

*Cheers and protests.*

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TROTSKY: Kerensky has fled from the Winter Palace in an American embassy car. He has left the capital. Some ministers have been arrested. Others will be arrested in the next few hours. We are about to take the Winter Palace.

*Applause. Uproar.*

KHINCHUK: Take care of the palace. It mustn't be stormed.

VOICE: The Winter Palace is in ruins.

SAILOR 1: There are no ruins. Only warning shots. That was enough. Get on with your work, comrades.

MARTOV: You have decided the matter of power through a conspiracy. The various revolutionary parties are presented with a fait accompli. The crisis can only be solved peacefully by setting up an authority which can be recognized by all democratic forces.

SHLYAPNIKOV: Not a conspiracy, Martov. An armed rising of the workers and soldiers of Petrograd.

MARTOV: The Congress cannot meet under threat of arms.

KHINCHUK: There must be talks with the provisional government.

ABRAMOVICH: Abolish the constituent assembly and there'll be chaos. Russia will be plunged into civil war.

TROTSKY: With whom are we to negotiate? I say, with whom? With the people who are moving out? In this Congress millions of workers and peasants are represented. Are these to negotiate on equal terms with that miserable heap whom nobody in Russia supports?

ABRAMOVICH: You don't represent the whole people.

RYKOV: We represent the people that matter. We Bolsheviks represent the proletariat of both town and country.

MARTOV: We demand an immediate cease-fire on both sides. We demand the setting up of a united democratic front.

*Catcalls. Laughter. Applause.*

VOICE: Are you Mensheviks still here?

LENIN: If there are any comrades here who don't accept our program, they had better disappear with the other deserters and compromisers. Let's get on. Next point.

MARTOV, ABRAMOVICH, KHINCHUK *spring to their feet.*

MARTOV: This Congress is unconstitutional.

*Laughter. Uproar. The right wing of the Mensheviks begin to withdraw.*

KAMENEV: Put in the minutes: Martov, Abramovich, Khinchuk leave the chamber with the right-wing Mensheviks.

TROTSKY: You're bankrupt. Your role's played out. Go where you belong — into the rubbish bins of history.

*Laughter. Applause. A few more delegates jump up.*

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KREMER: Under these conditions it is impossible for the delegates of the United Jewish Workers to take part in the debate.

KAMENEV: Put in the minutes: the delegates of the United Jewish Workers leave the chamber.

KUCHIN: Political adventurers are here deciding over the life of the nation. The soldiers in the trenches are not on your side.

*Protests.* PETERSON, *a soldier, rises.*

PETERSON: Whom are you speaking for, Kuchin?

KUCHIN: For our people at the front. We refuse to accept any responsibility for the consequences of this gamble.

PETERSON: Enough hot air. You do *not* represent the front line. I've just come from there. We're waiting impatiently for the soviets to assume power. Delegates who haven't been sent here by anybody should leave the Congress.

*Applause.* KUCHIN *goes off. Some other delegates accompany him.*

KAMENEV: What's your name, comrade?

PETERSON: Peterson. Soldier from Latvia.

KAMENEV: On the minutes. The delegates of the front line army committee leave the chamber. The group of Right Social Revolutionaries leave the chamber.

*Uproar. Applause. Whistling. A workers' delegation comes in.*

WORKER 1: Comrades, you must do something about Kaledin. At once. He's trying to cut off the coal mines in the Don basin and block the food supplies.

WORKER 2: Kerensky's in Gatchina. He's ordered a forced march on Petrograd by the Cossack regiment.

TROTSKY *writes notes and gives them to messengers. He turns to* SHLYAPNIKOV *and* MRACHKOVSKY.

TROTSKY: Reinforcements for Miliutin. To the goods yard. To the market.

SHLYAPNIKOV *and* MRACHKOVSKY *go off. A* SAILOR *comes in.*

SAILOR 2: The third bicycle batallion has come over to the side of the revolution.

*Cheers. A messenger gives* RYKOV *a telegram.*

RYKOV: Telegram from the Twelfth Army. Sends greetings to the Congress. Reports formation of a military revolutionary committee to watch over the northern front. Attempts by the provisional government to summon armed help foiled by troop resistance. The commander in chief of the northern front, General Cheremissov, has agreed to subordinate himself to the committee.

*Cheers. A group of soldiers — Cossacks — from the front enters.*

SOLDIER: We represent the echelons sent by the provisional government

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to Petrograd. We have decided to join the revolutionary garrison in Petrograd.

*Cheers. Delegates embrace.* TROTSKY *rises.*

TROTSKY: The Congress puts full power in the hands of the soviets. Workers, peasants, soldiers, the future of the revolution now lies with you.

KAMENEV: Comrade Lenin.

LENIN *rises amid cheers and applause. He stands bowed. Puts a hand protectively over his eyes, then supports himself with both hands on the desk.*

LENIN: We shall now proceed to construct the socialist order.

*Applause.*

*All rise. From the sides soldiers and sailors come in. They all raise their arms and clench their fists. They begin to sing the "Internationale."*

*As they are singing, a troop of soldiers dressed in the uniform of the late twenties clear themselves a path through the assembled people. They come up behind* TROTSKY. *Two officers take him by the arms. The song ends. All turn away from* TROTSKY. *Only* LENIN *remains standing beside him. One of the officers reads from a paper. All stand motionless.*

OFFICER: Citizen Trotsky, Lev Davidovich, charged under paragraph fifty-eight/ten of the penal code of having taken part in counterrevolutionary activity through the organization of an illegal antisoviet party, whose efforts have lately been directed towards provoking antisoviet actions and preparing for an armed struggle against soviet power. Resolved that Citizen Trotsky, Lev Davidovich, be deported from the territories of the Soviet Republic. Promulgated on the twentieth of January, nineteen hundred and twenty-nine.

*The officers and soldiers drag* TROTSKY *towards the back. He resists. They lift him up bodily and carry him to the back.* LENIN *remains alone at the desk. Nobody looks round at the group.*

# ACT TWO

*The setting is the same.*

## 10. KRONSTADT

TROTSKY *is seated on a chair at front. He is looking through a telescope, describing with it a semicircle to front. At back* LEV SEDOV *and* BLUMKIN. BLUMKIN *is talking softly,* LEV SEDOV *putting*

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*questions and making notes.* NATALIA *comes past with a large bunch of flowers.*

BLUMKIN: The name of Trotsky is being scratched from the records of the revolution. In Eisenstein's film about the October rising you're not even mentioned. Coming generations will know nothing about you. History is being rewritten. And all that remains is He. From the beginning it was *he* alone who stood at Lenin's side. *He* is putting into effect what you and Lenin planned ten years ago, and what you failed to do. You tried to achieve socialism through education, by way of a cultural revolution. His way is through force, over the bodies of men. And he'll be proved right. He'll make the country so strong, industrially and militarily, that it will stand up to all attacks. You yourself, Lev Davidovich, didn't hesitate to use force when the proletarian dictatorship was threatened.

TROTSKY: Blumkin, you must not go back. You'll be put against the wall and shot when they hear you've been visiting me.

BLUMKIN: I'm an old terrorist, you know that. I couldn't be in both the GPU and the opposition at once if I didn't know how to look after myself. I can always say I visited you as a secret agent, in an attempt to make you show your hand.

BLUMKIN *goes off.*

LEV SEDOV: He won't last long. Not even Dzerzhinsky, if he were still alive, could help him now. Blumkin was always one for desperate acts. Nineteen eighteen, when he shot the German ambassador, he could have wrecked the revolution. Wanted war to the bitter end, at any price.

TROTSKY: Terror. This idea confused many of us. We were against acts of individual terrorism. The romantic illusion of a handful of rebels wrecking Czarism with revolver shots, a knife and a few bombs. The masses were to be led towards class warfare, not invited to put their hopes in a few avengers and liberators acting on their behalf.

LEV SEDOV: And today, Father? You condemn violence and acts of sabotage against the bureaucrats?

TROTSKY: Terrorism as a method of opposition? That would be madness. The Soviet Union must be protected at all costs. Our task is to strengthen the International. To support the fight outside. (*He rises, walks to and fro*) The only terrorism we ever recognized was the terror of the masses. It was necessary in the fight against the bourgeoisie, the Social Revolutionaries, the Mensheviks. Only with this politically based terrorism, this revolutionary force, could the Russian proletariat, a tiny minority, come to power. Magnificent audacity. Magnificent

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achievement. While the huge mass of workers in Europe, with their powerful parties, stood still, gave in. What was this terror, this force, against the terror of the capitalists? But in one way we miscalculated. The class enemy did not collapse under the weight of its own contradictions. Not yet. It gathered new strength. Expanded unchecked. The German empire, the British empire, they were surpassed by American capital, now busy taking over one continent after another. The revolution? Yes, it will go on. But in difficulties we couldn't at that time foresee. More force will be needed before the masses can get free of our modern imperialists. The enemy is vast. And vast too its number of lickspittles, arse-crawlers. Mass terrorism. Revolutionary force. Yes. Without doubt. Without hesitation.

## 11. THE DEATH OF LENIN

TROTSKY *goes to the desk. With pedantic thoroughness he arranges the papers on it. Then he sits for a while as at the beginning of the play.*

LENIN *enters. He walks heavily, bowed down, his head lowered. He lies down on the camp bed and presses his head with his hands.*

LENIN: We always started from the idea that you can't build socialism in a single land. We avoided too much haste in planning our industries and collectives. Always reckoned on growing support from the workers of the more advanced countries. But now there's a tendency to neglect the international program. Bureaucracy flourishing inside the party. I ask for information, and the general secretary insolently cuts my contact to the Politburo. Says I'm too ill to bother with problems of organization. Lev Davidovich, set up a commission to cut down bureaucracy in the administration.

TROTSKY *gets up and sits down again in a chair beside the camp bed.*

TROTSKY: That wouldn't be enough. It's not only in the administration it's taken root. In the party leadership too.

LENIN: Collect the best and most experienced revolutionaries together. Set up inspectorates of workers and peasants. An examining commission with powers on a level with the leadership. We must do something before it's too late. (*He presses his temples*) We wanted to build a workers' state. Tried to make it a living, democratic thing. We needed a centralized party to do it. And now the machine has turned against us. It's true. I try to steer, but the wheels won't respond. The vehicle swerves about in all directions. I can't control it any more. Stalin must be got out. Much too much power in his hands. He's just waiting for me to go. To grab the party for himself alone.

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Zinoviev, Kamenev are working with him. They always were waverers. But one mustn't judge them by their behavior last October, they have other excellent qualities. Among the younger people Pyatakov and Bukharin would be acceptable in a collective leadership. You, Davidovich, are the most capable. But so full of ideas, you tend to extremes. Often shoot wide of the mark. Then get tangled up in administrative matters. Yes, you are partly responsible for the monolithic state that's now growing up. You see your mistakes too late.

*A moment of silence.* TROTSKY *sits in a sunken attitude.*

LENIN: Why don't you speak? Why, when I'm about to go, do you suddenly become so weak and helpless? Why do you pull back? Why don't you accept my suggestion? Fight in my place at the party conference for the revival of proletarian democracy? Against the bureaucrats.

TROTSKY: The Politburo calls my attacks on them attacks on the party. They push the general secretary forward and don't see it is he who is pushing them.

LENIN: So you go on waiting. Your overconfidence again. Do you think they'll run after you? Proclaim you my successor?

*A period of silence.* LENIN *lies stretched out, an arm over his face.* TROTSKY *stands up and walks to and fro.*

TROTSKY: Beside you I could work. Could lead the fight against bureaucratic methods. I watched the new generation, the young cadres. Could talk to them. Be damned to passive obedience, servility. Stand up for your beliefs. Defend them. But when you died, all that remained was the struggle for power. I couldn't join in that.

LENIN: You mustn't let yourself be pushed aside, Lev Davidovich. You must be firm, unyielding. They'll see you're right in the end. Our revolution must spread out into world revolution, or it will die. Everything must be sacrificed to that, all short-term advantages ignored. International class warfare. Hold firm to that. China's on the brink of revolution. Russia and China. If India comes in, we'll have an overwhelming majority. Keep on. Keep on.

*He lies with closed eyes, stretched out stiffly.* TROTSKY *goes to a chair at front and sits.*

FOUR SOLDIERS, *as before, march in to the camp bed. They lift* LENIN *up and carry him to the back. Figures appears there:* KAMENEV, ZINOVIEV, PYATAKOV, DZERZHINSKY, RAKOVSKY, SMIRNOV, BUKHARIN, STALIN. *The soldiers lay* LENIN *on a bier. The others lift the bier and, closely huddled, bear it towards the front with slow, dragging steps.* TROTSKY *remains motionless.*

STALIN: In leaving us, Comrade Lenin commanded us to protect the unity of our party. We swear, Comrade Lenin, to honor your com-

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mand. In leaving us, Comrade Lenin ordered us to maintain and strengthen the dictatorship of the proletariat. We swear, Comrade Lenin, to honor your command.

In leaving us, Comrade Lenin enjoined us to be faithful to the principles of the communist International. We swear, Comrade Lenin, to dedicate our lives to strengthening and increasing the links between the workers of the whole world in the communist International.

*The procession returns to the back in a semicircle and goes off.*

LEV SEDOV *enters. He goes to* TROTSKY.

LEV SEDOV: Father. A telephone call from Berlin. Zina is dead. She locked herself in her room. Turned on the gas.

TROTSKY *sits in a sunken attitude.* LEV SEDOV *goes off.*

## 12. WORLD REVOLUTION

TROTSKY *feels his own pulse, counting softly. He shivers.* NATALIA *comes in with a rug and a newspaper. She spreads the rug over his knees and places the newspaper beside him.* TROTSKY *takes up the telescope and looks through it, describing a semicircle toward the front.*

TROTSKY: What weather for May. Cold, damp. Grenoble shrouded in mist. But the mountain tops are clear. Can see every crack in the rocks. Like walls. The reckoning's not far off now.

*Voices are heard outside. Then a few inexpertly sung bars of the "Internationale."* TROTSKY *is startled.*

TROTSKY: They've followed us even here. (*He jumps up and takes cover behind the desk*) They'll shoot.

NATALIA: I think it's just the students from Paris. They asked to see you.

NATALIA *goes off.* TROTSKY *creeps beneath the desk. A group of students enters.* TROTSKY *takes some papers from his pocket, scatters them around and then picks them up. He rises, wipes his forehead with a hand and puts the papers on the desk.*

TROTSKY: The draught.

*He sits down at the desk. The students bring up chairs. The conversation begins at once.*

FRENCH STUDENT: Since you're not allowed to come to Paris, we've come as a delegation to you.

GERMAN STUDENT: We have a lot of questions. Plenty to discuss. Will there ever be a Fourth International anyway? The slump in America and England didn't produce the revolutionary situation you said it would. You declared that the capitalist system was on the verge of collapse. At long last. How many times have you said that already?

TROTSKY: The capitalist system stinks of corruption. The conditions are

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ripe for proletarian revolution. Have been for years. The masses are on the road. But their own conservative bureaucratic machinery is holding them back. It's not the workers who are incapable, but their leaders who are paralyzed. That's why we need a new International. Agitation, mass strikes, ultimatums, and the rotten capitalist system would crumble.

INDOCHINESE STUDENT: Our Indochinese party will find the way to revolution. For us the true International is the one you and Lenin conceived. It points the way to permanent world revolution.

TROTSKY: Don't be deceived by the smallness of our numbers. It's not clear at the moment where revolutionary strength really lies. My feeling, comrades, is that we can reckon with no immediate successes in our metropolitan centers. The coming imperialist war will perhaps destroy us all. But the basic situation stays unchanged. The peoples at whose cost the war is being waged will fight for their freedom. Look at China. There a new sort of revolutionary movement has already begun. Mao Tse Tung is building up his army of peasants deep in the interior. And, while Chiang Kai-shek wages his bourgeois nationalistic battle against them, Mao is busy forming soviets of peasants and sharing out the land.

INDOCHINESE STUDENT: You yourself once called the peasants the packhorses of civilization. You too thought it impossible that the country people could ever form a communist party.

TROTSKY: I was afraid that Mao Tse Tung's revolution was too much concerned with the interest of the peasants, and was losing sight of the workers. That revolution which came to the towns from the country would lead to violent clashes with the industrial proletariat. The revolution can succeed only when the workers fight together with the peasants.

GERMAN STUDENT: For that view the Comintern demanded your head.

INDOCHINESE STUDENT: For us the Chinese revolution provides the model. In Viet Nam there is little difference between workers, peasants, students. We all possess nothing. The word proletariat has a wider meaning for us than for you in Europe. Our first cadres and soviets were formed in the villages and plantations as well as in the factories and harbors. In order to quell the revolts the French directed their air attacks against the peasants. The colonists know that in our country the enemy is everywhere.

FRENCH STUDENT: The things that are happening in Viet Nam, in China, are in line with the theories of permanent revolution. They skip the bourgeois democratic phase. Surprise guerrilla actions all the time. Yet still both Mao Tse Tung and the Indochina party stick out-

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wardly to directives which are wrong for the revolution in Asia.

GERMAN STUDENT: Proof of Moscow's great reputation as the center of world revolution.

INDOCHINESE STUDENT: And the great influence of Lenin's writings. Nguyen Ai Quoc, the leader of our party, has told us how he broke into tears when he first read Lenin's essays on the national and colonial problem. That was when he was an emigrant in Paris after the war. Yes, that's what we need, he cried. National heroes, martyrs. That is our way to freedom.

TROTSKY: The fight for freedom always begins where the position is most intolerable. In the darkest, most completely forgotten places.

GERMAN STUDENT: Comrade Trotsky. You have got rid of the old regime. You have fundamentally changed the whole concept of ownership. But you have not succeeded in spreading the revolution to the hearts of men.

TROTSKY: Can we transform human thinking in the space of a few years? You forget we stood alone. That the struggle for a new economic policy took all our strength.

GERMAN STUDENT: You got trapped in your own authoritarian thinking. You abolished class distinctions, yes. But you prevented the liberation of human consciousness. You, Comrade Trotsky, introduced forced labor, which is now a reality. You helped to break the power of the trade unions, leaving them helpless, as they are today. You yourself wanted complete state control over the proletariat. You ordered workers who resisted you to be shot. (TROTSKY *jumps up angrily*)

TROTSKY: The revolution was in danger of collapsing. There was no other way. You want to remove all authority, all restrictions right away. Like our old anarchists. They thought, when everything was smashed, the new order would create itself. But you forget that revolution is the most authoritarian thing on earth. One part of the population using extreme violence to enforce its will on the other part. And if the victorious part wishes to keep its power, it cannot for a long time afford to give up its weapons.

GERMAN STUDENT: Our fathers saw the October Revolution as the great beginning. But we see its weak points. What has happened to all those famous cooks?

FRENCH FEMALE STUDENT: What cooks?

GERMAN STUDENT: Lenin said any cook would be capable of running the state. Yet the workers are led by state managers. And what happened to the plans for abolishing the family, the most reactionary of institutions? It's now back to the domestic hearth, the sacred cell, the joys of motherhood. Instead of independence through learning and knowl-

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edge, you now have obedience through discipline. Instead of revolutionary art, art as the joy of new discovery, you've got sentimentality, empty idealism, fear of the unknown. Where is this new socialist man, free of selfishness, ambition, competitive instincts and base designs?

TROTSKY: I too have often had to fight hard against these nostalgic visions, comrade. Against this personal sense of the shortness of life, the vanity of effort. But then I see them before my eyes. Workers, soldiers, sailors, peasants. Men, women, old and young activists. Their faces. Their upright bodies. When I consider the mistakes of socialism, my own deficiencies, these people living today give me a clear answer. Their social system, for all its deformities, represents the greatest advance that men have ever made. In the struggle against fascism it is they who will have to carry the main load. You must support them.

AFRO-AMERICAN STUDENT: Lenin spoke in the Comintern about the black American's right to self-determination. But he didn't say how it was to be got. How can we achieve social, political and economic equality? Many of us are demanding a separate black state.

TROTSKY: That is a racialist slogan. Fight for equal rights by all means, but don't let it lead you away from the class struggle. There is a black bourgeoisie too, which shares your wish for equal rights. But ideologically it won't go further than the white workers. You are out for more. In the American class war your proletariat is the most important force, the one that will prove decisive.

AFRO-AMERICAN STUDENT: We can't join with the white workers. There's nobody more chauvinistic than they are. And they'll go on trying to keep us out of their jobs, their unions and their houses.

TROTSKY: If the white workers go on letting themselves be exploited, if they continue to believe the state is theirs just because their trade union aristocrats make deals with industry and the armed forces, then your first move must be to fight for your own liberation. That would be a huge step forward. Sign of a great moral and political awakening. And as you improve your education, a Marxist leadership is bound to arise. But you must never cut yourself off from the white proletariat. You need allies, you need a common militant party. You will be the vanguard. Remain divided, and they will finish you off one after the other.

SOUTH AMERICAN STUDENT: The American maneuvers in Pearl Harbor, with all those huge air squadrons, the build-up of armaments, they're not only hints of what solutions are being planned for Western Europe. They also show us what we can expect in South America. Roosevelt goes on talking about good neighborly relations. But we

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know it's not only the compradors we shall have to fight, but the whole might of North America. Our future lies in guerrilla warfare.

TROTSKY: The conditions in South America are different from those in China. And different again from Africa, India. In the course of whole centuries your rural population has grown used to its weakness and poverty. In China the revolutionary leaders live among the peasants. In your countries there is no common cultural background. The small farmers, the shepherds, the Indians, when you go among them, they look on you with suspicion. You don't speak their language. You grew up in the cities. Can read and write. They know nothing except their mountains, their valleys, their forests.

SOUTH AMERICAN STUDENT: Yet it is easier for us there, out in the deserts, than in the cities and industrial centers. Just because of their constant daily need, they've never learned how to toe the line in order to gain some imagined advantage. Money has never corrupted them, since they scarcely know what money is. From them we can expect everything. They have nothing to lose.

TROTSKY: Yet I still believe it's the workers in industry, in the cities, who first realize their position. Who are willing to find out. Without a political conception, without a party, nothing can be done.

SOUTH AMERICAN STUDENT: I don't think the city parties' directives will be of much help to us, Comrade Trotsky. None of the existing theories fit our problem. Perhaps we shall have to start right at the beginning. As you did, with a handful of professional revolutionaries. Discover our strategy as we go along.

TROTSKY: Yes, I don't suggest the backward countries should simply wait patiently until the proletariat from the metropolitan centers come to free them. Conditions for armed rebellion must be created everywhere. In different ways. In the towns through political argument, through legal, semilegal and illegal activities. In the country districts through education in its simplest form. Since the workers form a single class, they can join in pressing common demands. Through strikes, demonstrations. The illiterate small farmers are not a class. Nationalities, tribal customs, religions, superstitions, divide them. They can rise up spontaneously against profiteers, feudal landlords. Hunger, misery impels them. But to sustain a lasting revolution, you need a political conviction. That's why a rebellion, if it is to become a liberation movement, must be led by enlightened workers.

SOUTH AMERICAN STUDENT: Time will show whether objective conditions in the classical sense are necessary in Guatemala, Bolivia, Peru. Or whether they can't be created through subjective surprise actions.

*The* STUDENTS *rise and prepare to leave.*

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FRENCH STUDENT: You know, I suppose, that down there in the community center, in Grenoble, Thorez and Ilya Ehrenburg are being feted by the town. We went to the meeting. Ehrenburg started off with a panegyric for his government, then said hopes for preserving peace now lie in the Red Army. In the discussion afterwards we asked him if he was going to visit the founder of the Red Army up here in the mountains.

*The* STUDENTS *go off laughing.* TROTSKY *comes forward, takes up the telescope and looks through it.*

## 15. THE EXECUTION

TROTSKY *straightens up.* NATALIA *appears at front.*

TROTSKY: Beautiful. Life is beautiful. This shining grass. White walls. The blue sky behind you. It's a long time since I felt so well.

NATALIA *comes up beside him and puts a hand on his shoulder.*

You know, Natalia, on this stage you are the main character. (*They laugh*) We have lived together nearly forty years. Forty years. Inconceivable without you.

NATALIA *kisses him on the forehead.*

NATALIA: Jacson is outside. He wants to show you his essay.

TROTSKY: Yes, on the situation in occupied France. I can't imagine it will say very much. (*He laughs*) But we must encourage him.

JACSON *appears at front from the side. He is wearing a hat and holds a raincoat pressed against his side.* NATALIA *goes towards him.*

NATALIA: Why the hat and coat? It's so hot.

JACSON: There are thunder clouds over the mountains. It might rain.

NATALIA: I've never seen you with a coat before, even in the rain.

JACSON *gives a nervous laugh.*

You don't look well, Jacson.

JACSON: I feel a bit sick. Full up to here. (*He moves a hand jerkily to his throat*)

NATALIA: Would you like a cup of tea?

JACSON: Water, perhaps. I've got a terrible thirst.

NATALIA *goes off.* JACSON *crosses to the desk. He clumsily extracts a manuscript from the pocket of the raincoat, holding the coat close against his body.* TROTSKY *takes the manuscript.* JACSON *sits on the edge of the desk. He is still wearing his hat.*

TROTSKY: Good, it's typewritten. Makes it easier to read.

*He bends over the manuscript, as at the beginning of the play.* NATALIA *comes in with a glass of water, which she gives to* JACSON. *He drinks it all.*

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NATALIA: How is Sylvia?

JACSON: Sylvia? Sylvia?

NATALIA: Isn't Sylvia coming today? I thought you were leaving together.

JACSON *nods.*

NATALIA: Then I'll see you afterward in the garden.

NATALIA *goes off.* TROTSKY, *bending over the manuscript, pen in hand, reads a while. Then he turns with an irritable gesture to* JACSON, *who is still sitting on the corner of the desk.* JACSON *stands up, grinning nervously. He stands behind* TROTSKY, *waiting.* TROTSKY *sits motionless over the manuscript, as at the beginning.* JACSON *silently moves up close behind him. Slowly he pulls an ice axe from the raincoat. Its handle has been shortened. With both hands he lifts the axe high over* TROTSKY'S *head and prepares to bring it down.*

## BLACKOUT

(*Translated from the German by Geoffrey Skelton*)

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# POEMS

## EVENING WOLVES

Generality of white light at Creation
Blindly contracted into mere orbs of yellow
    Sun and cool of moon and of icier
        Starlight. But where does it hang, the spore

Left of this narrowed blue? Midwinter wolves running
Under such final light flash signals from something
    Blue like the false ball of an eye which is
        That of no wolf, but is his who wields

Blues of the cold alone; of hurrying lateness,
Shortness of north and its furthest dark hours;
    Blue not of sky ice, but of whiteness of
        Grayness of wolf. And of other wolves

As in a rush of judgment, sudden from shadows,
Stopped, like the icy axe of a frozen comber
    Midcrested, edging some condemned, empty
        Shore. These are shadows of blue of wolves

Under the pine-broken verge the line of sky makes
With the wide, distant ice that our gaze had strained for:
    Blue not of high eyes, but of blindness of
        Failure. Of wolf. An indented line

Bares the blue light unfallen, general, coldly
Creating only itself. Pelted in thunder,
    Hard-eared, like wandering stars they skim these
        Dimmed, clouded fields, this blackness of blue.

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## THE ANTIQUITIES IN ROOM 101

A paperclip imprisons Her,
Gripping Her hidden page against
Its even one — as if a small,
Upsetting picture appearing
In my left palm were clapped away
Into the darkness of my right
One — The benign backs of the leaves
Yield only the rustle of dry
Texts: rainfall along the Nile; rice
And cotton — but no glimpses nor
Even mention of monuments.
Meanwhile, unwinkingly across
Aeons made contiguous by
Folds in a printed surface, She
Kisses Her facing page, blunted
Nose smudged away by no caress
Of Hers, as no whispering twists
The half-remembered mouth into:
A grin? A frown of leonine,
Brown, female rubble too much like
A hill? The wind of fear blew down
My slope of face and arm a month
Before, when She thrust Herself at
My unarmed eye and clung — whether
Claws sank in my consciousness or
Image, after-image adhered
Behind my awareness, claiming
All of that old kingdom. Naming
Her, that hard word that gripped the mouth
Like muscle, then vanishing in
Strangeness of χ-spelled close, would hurt.

I would not look. For weeks Her stone,
Fattening on time and dry air,
Has squatted deep in sand, the parts
That will not be seen yet having
Less and less to do with legs each

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Adding day. The book that hides me
From Her itself menaces now
When evening lamp shadows, cast through
A yellowed parchment shade alight
On its tall atlas spine. Four-legged
Beast, crouched on my hands and knees on
The sandstone carpet, I dare not
Reach forward toward its questions, Her
Question: What was I? What am I
To be? as reddening shadows
Fall across a desert's chilling,
Unaverted face, as a hushed,
Syllable falls, unanswering —
The Mother, waiting late, disturbed —
The troublesome riddle of breath.

## AUTUMN, 1970

Golden pears hanging
Over full, wild roses:
The land in the lake.

Behold the far swans,
Drunk with the images
They kiss, bills dunking

Into dark water.
What pictures shall we drink
In the midland cold?

Summer's shadow lies
As if unpromised, dry
Along silent walls;

Windward we sit, watched
From behind pennants that
Slap the windy air.

**John Hollander**

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## ON BEHOLDING A FRUIT TREE

Apples and oranges, grapefruit and plums
Remind me of that evening, far away
When I touched you sitting by the fence

By the tree. Apples and oranges, grapefruit
And nectarines share with me
The memory of you decked in sheer harmony

And rapture with nature. The natural
Curls you wore, the fit of glove with
Taffeta all served to bear

In me a singular imagery, an
Ephemeral contempt for pedestrian things.
Apples and oranges, grapefruit and plums

Remind me of that evening by the grass
When hummingbirds indeed hummed
And the world was fresh with citrus.

## CANTO I

It is moon, and night.
I have waiting here since afternoon, trying to
find if Marie has forgotten me.
She has . . .

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I do not see her.
She is with another man, a stranger perhaps,
licking his knees and holding his wrists.
He is stroking her breasts, her mellow, livid
breasts. A bird flies overhead, giving vent
to its full day's mourning.
(Soon it will be morning)
Yes I have been waiting here since this afternoon, waiting,
just waiting.
I see no one, nothing, no tree, no bird, no breasts, no men
no fulfillment
no rocks . . .

## THREE MONGOLOID IDIOTS FROM SANTO DOMINGO

Three mongoloid idiots from Santo Domingo
With grapes on their foreheads and baskets
Of rye bread into the dawnlight go slouching for
Seagulls, their only mistake their trusting
Higher abstractions than themselves. Shadows

Disappear and when they do the most impervious
Personage scrawls his boyhood name on borrowed
Sand; the seashore quakes with potted laughter,
The quiet seeds bazoom, and in pineapple twilight
The crackpot kings march, their faces placid with

The strength of Elijah's skull's-eye breadth. But
As of now it's timeless grape of day time, and the
Village creeps crawl naked. Who will put the pagan
Ocean in the sun? Who will scribble sand-songs? Not
The crippled, but the gainly.

**Jerome Nathanson**

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## Doris Lessing

# SPIES I HAVE KNOWN

I don't want you to imagine that I am drawing any sort of comparison between the Salisbury, Rhodesia, of thirty years ago, a one horse-town then, if not now, and more august sites. God forbid. But it does no harm to lead into a weighty subject by way of the miniscule.

It was in the middle of the Second World War. A couple of dozen people ran a dozen or so organisations, of varying degrees of left-wingedness. The town, though a capitol city, was still in that condition when "everybody knows everybody else." The white population was about ten thousand; the number of Black people, then as now, only guessed at. There was a Central Post Office, a rather handsome building, and one of the mail sorters attended the meetings of The Left Club. It was he who explained to us the system of censorship operated by the Secret Police. All the incoming mail for the above dozen organisations was first put into a central box marked *CENSOR* and was read — at their leisure, by certain trusted citizens. Of course all this was as to be expected, and what we knew must be happening. But there were other proscribed organisations, like the Watchtower, a religious sect, for some reason suspected by governments up and down Africa — perhaps because they prophesied the imminent end of the world? — and some fascist organisations, reasonably enough in a war against fascism. There were organisations of obscure aims, and perhaps five members and a capital of five pounds, and also individuals whose mail had first to go through the process, as it were, of decontamination, or defusing. It was this last list of a hundred or so people which was the most baffling. What

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did they have in common, these sinister ones whose opinions were such a threat to the budding Southern Rhodesian State, then still in the Lord Malvern phase of the Huggins/Lord Malvern/Welenski/Garfield Todd/Winston Field/Smith succession? After months, indeed, years, of trying to understand what could unite them, we had simply to give up. Of course, half were on the left, kaffir lovers and so on, but what of the others? It was when a man wrote a letter to the *Rhodesia Herald* in solemn parody of Soviet official style — as heavy then as now, urging immediate extermination by firing squad of our government, in favour of a team from the Labour Opposition, and we heard from our contact in the post office that his name was now on the Black List, that we began to suspect the truth.

Throughout the war, this convenient arrangement continued. Our Man in the Post Office — by then several men, but it doesn't sound so well, kept us informed of what and who was on the Black List. And if our mail was being held up longer than we considered reasonable, the censors being on holiday, or lazy, authority would be gently prodded to hurry things up a little.

This was my first experience of Espionage.

Next was when I knew someone who knew someone who had told him of how a certain Communist Party Secretary had been approached by the man whose occupation it was to tap communist telephones — we are now in Europe. Of course, the machinery for tapping was much more primitive then. Probably by now they have dispensed with human intervention altogether, and a machine judges the degree of a suspicious person's disaffection by the tones of his voice. Then, and in that country, they simply played back records of conversation. This professional had been in the most intimate contact with communism and communists for years, becoming involved with shopping expeditions, husbands late from the office, love affairs, a divorce or so, children's excursions. He had been sucked into active revolutionary politics by, as it were, the back entrance.

"I don't think you ought to let little Jackie go at all. He'll be in bed much too late, and you know how bad tempered he gets when he is overtired."

"She said to me No, she said. That's final. If you want to do a thing like that, then you must do it yourself. You shouldn't expect

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other people to pull your chestnuts out of the fire, she said. If he was rude to you, then it's your place to tell him so."

He got frustrated, like an intimate friend or lover with paralysis of the tongue. And there was another thing, his involvement was always at a remove. He was listening to events, emotions, several hours old. Sometimes weeks old, as for instance when he went on leave and had to catch up with a month's dangerous material all in one exhausting twenty-four hours. He found that he was getting possessive about certain of his charges, resented his colleagues listening in to "my suspects." Once he had to wrestle with temptation because he longed to seek out a certain woman on the point of leaving her husband for another man. Due to his advantageous position he knew the other man was not what she believed. He imagined how he would trail her to the café which he knew she frequented, sit near her, then lean over and ask: "May I join you? I have something of importance to divulge." He knew she would agree: he knew her character well. She was unconventional, perhaps not as responsible as she ought to be, careless for instance about the regularity of meals, but fundamentally, he was sure, a good girl, with the potentiality of good wifehood. He would say to her: "Don't do it, my dear! No, don't ask me how I know, I can't tell you that. But if you leave your husband for that man, you'll regret it!" He would press her hands in his, looking deeply into her eyes — he was sure they were brown, for her voice was definitely the voice of a brown-eyed blonde — and then stride forever out of her life. Afterward he could check on the success of his intervention through the tapes.

To cut a process short that took some years, he at last went secretly to a communist bookshop, bought some pamphlets, attended a meeting or two, and discovered that he would certainly become a Party member if it were not that his job, and a very well paid one with good prospects, was to spy on the Communist party. He felt in a false position. What to do? He turned up at the offices of the Communist party, asked to see the Secretary, and confessed his dilemma. Roars of laughter from the Secretary.

These roars are absolutely obligatory in this convention, which insists on a greater degree of sophisticated understanding between professionals, even if on opposing sides and even if at war — party officials, government officials, top-ranking soldiers and the like — and the governed, ever a foolish, trusting and sentimental lot.

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First, then, the roar. Then a soupçon of whimsicality: alas for this badly ordered world where men so well-equipped to be friends must be enemies. Finally, the hard offer.

Our friend the telephone-tapper was offered a retaining fee by the Communist party, and their provisional trust, on condition that he stayed where he was, working for the other side. Of course, what else had he expected? Nor should he have felt insulted, for in such ways are the double agents born, those rare men at an altogether higher level than he could ever aspire to become in the hierarchies of espionage. But his finer feelings had been hurt by the offer of money, and he refused. He went off and suffered for a week or so, deciding that he really did have to leave his job with the Secret Police — an accurate name for what he was working for, though of course the name it went under was much blander. He returned to the Secretary in order to ask for the second time to become just a rank and file Communist party member. This time there was no roar of laughter, not even a chuckle, but the frank (and equally obligatory) I-am-concealing-nothing statement of the position. Which was that he surely must be able to see their point of view — the Communist party's. With a toehold in the enemy camp (a delicate way of describing his salary and his way of life) he could be of real use. To stay where he was could be regarded as a real desire to serve the People's cause. To leave altogether, becoming just honest John Smith, might satisfy his conscience (a subjective and conditioned organ as he must surely know by now if he had read those pamphlets properly) but would leave behind him an image of the capricious, or even the unreliable. What had he planned to tell his employers? "I am tired of tapping telephones, it offends me!" Or: "I regard this as an immoral occupation!" — when he had done nothing else for years? Come, come, he hadn't thought it out. He would certainly be under suspicion for ever more by his ex-employers. And of course he could not be so innocent, after so long spent in that atmosphere of vigilance and watchfulness, not to expect the Communists to keep watch on himself? No, his best course would be to stay exactly where he was, working even harder at tapping telephones. If not, then his frank advice (the Secretary's) could only be that he must become an ordinary citizen, as far from any sort of politics as possible, for his own sake, the sake of the Service he had

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left and the sake of the Communist party — which *of course* they believed he now found his spiritual home.

But the trouble was that he did want to join it. He wanted nothing more than to become part of the world of stern necessities he had followed for so long, but as it were from behind a one-way pane of glass. Integrity had disenfranchised him. From now on he could not hope to serve humanity except through the use of the vote.

His life was empty. His resignation cut off his involvement, like turning off the television on a soap opera, with the deathless real-life dramas of the tapes.

He felt that he was useless. He considered suicide, but thought better of it. Then, having weathered a fairly routine and unremarkable nervous breakdown, became a contemplative monk — High Church of England.

Another spy I met at a cocktail party, in the course of chat about this or that — it was in London, in the late fifties, said that at the outbreak of the Second World War he had been in Greece, or perhaps it was Turkey, where at another cocktail party, over the canapés, an official from the British Embassy invited him to spy for his country.

"But I can't," said this man. "You must know that perfectly well."

"But why ever not?" enquired the official, a Second Secretary, I think he was.

"Because, as of course you must know, I am a Communist Party member."

"Indeed? How interesting? But surely that is not going to stand in the way of your desire to serve your country?" said the official, matching ferocious honesty with bland interest.

Cutting this anecdote short — it comes, after all, from a pretty petty level in the affairs of men, this man went home, spent a sleepless night weighing his allegiances, and decided by morning that of course the Second Secretary was right. He would like to serve his country, which was engaged, after all, in a War against Fascism. He explained his decision to his superiors in the Communist party, who agreed with him, and to his wife and his comrades. Then, meeting the Second Secretary at another cocktail party, he informed him of the decision he had taken. He was then invited to attach himself to a

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certain army unit, in some capacity to do with the Ministry of Information. He was to wait orders. In due course they came, and he discovered that it was his task to spy on the navy, or rather, that portion of it operating near him. Our navy, of course. He was always unable to work out the ideology of this. That a Communist should not be set to spy on, let's say, Russia, seemed to him fair and reasonable, but why was he deemed suitable material to spy on his own side? He found it all baffling, and indeed rather lowering. Then, at a cocktail party, he happened to meet a naval officer with whom he proceeded to get drunk, and they both suddenly understood on a wild hunch, that they were engaged on spying in each other, one for the navy, one for the army. Both found this work without much uplift, they were simply not able to put their hearts into it, apart from the fact that they had been in the same class at prep school and had many other social ties. Not even the fact that they weren't being paid, since it was assumed by their superiors — quite correctly of course — that they would be happy to serve their countries for nothing, made them feel any better. They developed the habit of meeting regularly in a cafe where they drank wine and coffee and played chess on a vine-covered arbour overlooking a particularly fine bit of the Mediterranean where, without going through all the tedious effort of spying on each other, they simply gave each other relevant information. They were found out. Their excuse that they were fighting the war on the same side was deemed inadequate. They were both given the sack as spies, and transferred to less demanding work. But until D-Day and beyond, the British army spied on the British navy, and vice versa. They probably all still do.

The fact that human beings, given half a chance, start seeing each other's points of view seems to me the only ray of hope there is for humanity, but obviously this tendency must be one to cause anguish to seniors in the diplomatic corps and the employers of your common or garden spy — not the high level spies, but of that in a moment. Diplomats, until they have understood why, always complain that as soon as they understand a country and its language really well, hey presto, off they are whisked to another country. But diplomacy could not continue if the opposing factotums lost a proper sense of national hostility. Some diplomatic corps insist that their employees must only visit among each other, and never fraternise

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with the locals, obviously believing that understanding with others happens by a sort of osmosis. And of course, any diplomat that shows signs of going native, that is to say really enjoying the manners and morals of a place, must be withdrawn at once.

Not so the masters among the spies: one dedicated to his country's deepest interests must be worse than useless. The rarest spirits must be those able to entertain two or three allegiances at once; the counterspies, the double and triple agents. Such people are not born. It can't be that they wake up one morning at the age of thirteen crying: "Eureka, I've got it, I want to be a double agent! That's what I was born to do!" Nor can there be a training school for multiple spies, a kind of top class that promising pupils graduate toward. Yet that capacity which might retard a diplomat's career, or mean death to the small fry among spies, must be precisely the one watched out for by the Spymasters who watch and manipulate in the high levels of the world's thriving espionage systems. What probably happens is that a man drifts, even unwillingly, into serving his country as a spy — like my acquaintance of the cocktail party who then found himself spying on the Senior Service of his own side. Then, whether there through a deep sense of vocation, or unwillingly, he begins by making mistakes, sometimes pleased with himself and sometimes not; he goes through a phase of wondering whether he would not have done better to go into the Stock Exchange, or whatever his alternative was — and then suddenly there comes that moment, fatal to punier men but a sign of his own future greatness, when he is invaded by sympathy for the enemy. Long dwelling on what X is doing, likely to be doing, or thinking, or planning, makes X's thoughts as familiar and as likable as his own. The points of view of the nation he spends all his time trying to do undo are comfortably at home in a mind once tuned only to those of his own dear Fatherland. He is thinking the thoughts of those he used to call enemies before he understands that he is already psychologically a double agent, and before he guesses that those men who must always be on the watch for such precious material have noticed, perhaps even prognosticated, his condition.

On those levels where the really great spies move, whose names we never hear, but whose existence we have to deduce, what fantastic feats of global understanding must be reached, what metaphysical heights of international brotherhood!

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It is of course not possible to do more than take the humblest flights into speculation, while making do with those so frequent and highly publicised spy dramas, for some reason or other so very near to farce, that do leave obscurity for our attention.

It can't be possible that the high reaches of espionage can have anything in common with, for instance, this small happening.

A communist living in a small town in England, who had been openly and undramatically a communist for years, and for whom the state of being a communist had become rather like the practice of an undemanding religion — this man looked out of his window one fine summer afternoon to see standing in the street outside his house a car of such foreignness and such opulence that he was embarrassed, and at once began to work out what excuses he could use to his working-class neighbours whose cars, if any, would be dust in comparison. Out of this monster of a car came two large smiling Russians, carrying a teddy bear the size of a sofa, a bottle of vodka, a long and very heavy roll, which later turned out to be a vast carpet with the picture of the Kremlin on it, and a box of chocolates of British make, with a pretty lady and a pretty dog.

Every window in the street already had heads packed behind the curtains.

"Come in," said he, "but I don't think I have the pleasure of knowing who. . . ."

The roll of carpet was propped in the hall, the three children sent off to play with the teddy bear in the kitchen, and the box of chocolates set aside for the lady of the house, who was doing the week's shopping in the High Street. The vodka was opened at once.

It turned out that it was his wife they wanted: they were interested in him as a go-between. They wished him to ask his wife, who was an employee of the town council, to get hold of the records of the Council's meetings, and to pass these records on to them. Now, this wasn't London, or even Edinburgh. It was a small unimportant North of England town, in which it would be hard to imagine anything ever happening that could be of interest to anyone outside it, let alone the agents of a Foreign Power. But, said he, these records are open, anyone could go and get copies — you, for instance — "Comrades, I shall be delighted to take you to the Town Hall myself."

No, what they had been instructed to do was to ask his wife to procure them minutes and records, nothing less would do.

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A long discussion ensued. It was all no use. The Russians could not be made to see that what they asked was unnecessary. Nor could they understand that to arrive in a small suburban street in a small English town in a car the length of a battleship was to draw the wrong sort of attention.

"But why is that?" they enquired. "Representatives of the country where the workers hold power should use a good car. Of course, comrade. You have not thought it out from a class position!"

The climax came when, despairing of the effects of rational argument, they said: "And comrade, these presents, the bear, the carpet, the chocolates, the vodka, are only a small token in appreciation of your work for our common cause. Of course you will be properly recompensed."

At which point he was swept by, indeed taken over entirely by, atavistic feelings he had no idea were in him at all. He stood up and pointed a finger shaking with rage at the door: "How dare you imagine," he shouted, "that my wife and I would take money. If I were going to spy, I'd spy for the love of mankind, for duty, and for international socialism. Take those bloody things out of here. Wait, I'll get that teddy bear from the kids. And you can take your bloody car out of here too."

His wife, when she came back from the supermarket and heard the story, was even more insulted than he was.

But emotions like these are surely possible with only the lowest possible levels of spy material — in this case so low they didn't qualify for the first step, entrance into the brotherhood.

Full circle back to Our Man in the Post Office, or rather, the first of three.

After sedulous attendance at a lot of left-wing meetings, semi-private and public — for above all Tom was a methodical man who, if engaged in a thing always gave it full value — he put his hand up one evening in the middle of a discussion about agrarian reform in Venezuela, and said: "I must ask permission to ask a question."

Everyone always laughed at him when he did this, put up his hand to ask permission to speak, or to leave or to have opinions about something. Little did we realize that we were seeing here not just a surface mannerism, or habit, but his strongest characteristic.

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It was late in the meeting, at that stage when the floor is well loaded with empty coffee cups, beer glasses and full ash trays. Some people had already left.

He wanted to know what he ought to do: "I want to have the benefit of your expert advice." As it happened he had already taken the decision he was asking about.

After some two years of a life not so much double — the word implies secrecy — as dual, his boss in the Central Post Office called him to ask how he was enjoying his life with the Left. Tom was as doggedly informative with him as he was with us, and said that we were interesting people, well informed and full of a high-class brand of idealism which he found inspiring.

"I always feel good after going to one of their meetings," he reported he had said. "It takes you right out of yourself and makes you think."

His Chief said that he, for his part, always enjoyed hearing about idealism and forward-looking thought, and invited Tom to turn in reports about our activities, our discussions and most particularly our plans for the future, as well in advance as possible.

Tom told us that he said to his boss that "he didn't like the idea of doing that sort of thing behind our backs, because say what you like about the Reds, they are very hospitable."

The Chief had said that it would be for the good of his country.

Tom came to us to say that he had told his boss that he had agreed, because he wanted to be of assistance to the national war effort.

It was clear to everyone that having told us that he had agreed to spy on us, he would, since that was his nature, most certainly go back to his boss and tell him that he had told us that he had agreed to spy. After which he would come back to us to tell us that he had told his boss that. . . . And so on. Indefinitely, if his boss didn't get tired of it. Tom could not see that his Chief would shortly find him unsuitable material for espionage, and might even dismiss him from being a sorter in the Post Office altogether — a nuisance for us. After which he, the Chief, would probably look for someone else to give him information.

It was Harry, one of the other two post office employees attending Left Club meetings, who suggested that it would probably be himself who would next be invited to spy on us, now that Tom

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had "told." Tom was upset, when everybody began speculating about his probable supercession by Harry, or even Dick. The way he saw it was that his complete frankness with both us and his chief was surely deserving of reward. He ought to be left in the job. God knows how he saw the future. Probably that both his boss and ourselves would continue to employ him. We would use him to find out how our letters were slowly moving through the toils of censorship, and to hurry them on, if possible; his Chief would use him to spy on us. When I say employ, I don't want anyone to imagine this implies payment. Or at least, certainly not from our side. Ideology had to be his spur, sincerity his reward.

It will by now have been noticed that our Tom was not as bright as he might have been. But he was a pleasant enough youth. He was rather good-looking too, about twenty-two. His physical characteristic was neatness. His clothes were always just so; he had a small alert dark moustache; he had glossy dark well-brushed hair. His rather small hands were well manicured — the latter trait bound to be found offensive by good colonials, whose eyes for such anti-masculine evidence as they were bound to see it, then if not now, were acute. But he was a fairly recent immigrant, from just before the war, and had not yet absorbed the mores. He probably had not noticed that real Rhodesians, in those days at least, did not like men who went in for a careful appearance.

Tom, in spite of our humourous forecast that he would be bound to tell his boss that he had told us, and his stiff and wounded denials that such a thing was possible, found himself impelled to do just that. He reported back that his Chief had "lost his rag with him."

But that was not the end. He was offered the job of learning how to censor letters. He had said to his boss that he felt in honour bound to tell us, and his boss said: "Oh for Christ's sake. Tell them anything you damned well like. You won't be choosing what is to be censored."

As I said, this was an unsophisticated town in those days, and the condition of "everybody knowing everybody else" was bound to lead to such warm human situations.

He accepted the offer because: "My mother always told me that she wanted me to do well for myself, and I'll increase my rating into Schedule Three as soon as I start work on censoring, and that means an increment of £50 a year."

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We congratulated him, and urged him to keep us informed about how people were trained as censors, and he agreed to do this. Shortly after that the war ended, and all the camaraderie of wartime ended as the Cold War began. The ferment of left activity ended too.

We saw Tom no more, but followed his progress, steady if slow, up the Civil Service. The last I heard he was heading a department among whose duties is censorship. I imagine him, a man in his fifties, husband and no doubt a father, looking down the avenues of lost time to those dizzy days when he was the member of a dangerous revolutionary organisation. "Yes," he must often say, "you can't tell me anything about them. They are idealistic, I can grant you so much, but they are dangerous. Dangerous and wrongheaded! I left them as soon as I understood what they really were."

But of our three post-office spies Harry was the one whose career, for a while at least, was the most rewarding for humanist idealists.

He was a silent, desperately shy schoolboy who came to a public meeting and fell madly in love for a week or so with the speaker, a girl giving her first public speech and as shy as he was. His father had died and his mother, as the psychiatrists and welfare workers would say, was "inadequate." That is to say, she was not good at being a widow, and was frail in health. What little energy she had went into earning enough money for her and two younger sons to live on. She nagged at Harry for not having ambition, and for not studying for the examinations which would take him up the ladder into the next grade in the post office — and for wasting time with the Reds. He longed to be of use. For three years he devoted all his spare time to organisation on the left, putting up exhibitions, hiring halls and rooms, decorating ballrooms for fund-raising dances, getting advertisements for our socialist magazine — circulation two thousand — and laying it out and selling it. He argued principle with town councillors — "But it's not *fair* — not to let us have the hall, this is a democratic country, isn't it?" and spent at least three nights a week discussing world affairs in smoke-filled rooms.

At the time we would have dismissed as beyond redemption anyone who suggested it, but I dare say now that the main function of those gatherings was social. Southern Rhodesia was never exactly a hospitable country for those interested in anything but sports and

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the sundowner, and the fifty or so people who came to the meetings were all, whether in the forces, or refugees from Europe, or simply Rhodesians, souls in need of congenial company. And they were friendly occasions, those meetings, sometimes going on till dawn.

A girl none of us had seen before came to a public meeting. She saw Harry, a handsome, confident, loquacious, energetic, efficient young man. Everyone relied on him.

She fell in love, took him home, and her father, recognising one of the world's born organisers, made him manager in his hardware shop.

Which leaves the third, Dick. Now there are some people who should not be allowed anywhere near meetings, debates or similar intellect-fermenting agencies. He came to two meetings. Harry brought him, describing him as "keen." It was Harry who was keen. Dick sat on the floor on a cushion. Wild bohemian ways, these, for well–brought-up young whites. His forehead puckered like a puppy's while he tried to follow wild un-Rhodesian thought. He, like Tom, was a neat, well-set-up youth. Perhaps the post office, or at least in Rhodesia, is an institution that attracts the well-ordered? I remember he reminded me of a boiled sweet, bland sugar with a chemical tang. Or perhaps he was like a bulldog, all sleek latent ferocity, with its little bulging eyes, its little snarl. Like Tom, he was one for extracting exact information. "I take it you people believe that human nature can be changed?"

At the second meeting he attended, he sat and listened as before. At the end he enquired whether we thought socialism was a good thing in this country where there was the white man's burden to consider.

He did not come to another meeting. Harry said that he had found us seditious and un-Rhodesian. Also insincere. We asked Harry to go and ask Dick why he thought we were insincere, and to come back and tell us. It turned out that Dick wanted to know why The Left Club did not take over the government of the country and run it, if we thought the place ill run. But we forgot Dick, particularly as Harry, at the zenith of his efficiency and general usefulness, was drifting off with his future wife to become a hardware-store manager. And by then Tom was lost to us.

Suddenly we heard that "The Party for Democracy, Liberty, and Freedom" was about to hold a preliminary mass meeting. One

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of us was delegated to go along and find out what was happening. This turned out to be me.

The public meeting was in a side room off a ballroom in one of the town's three hotels. It was furnished with a sideboard to hold the extra supplies of beer and sausage rolls and peanuts consumed so plentifully during the weekly dances, a palm in a pot so tall the top fronds were being pressed down by the ceiling and a dozen stiff dining room chairs ranged one by one along the walls. There were eleven men and women in the room, including Dick. Unable to understand immediately why this gathering struck me as so different from the ones in which I spent so much of my time, I then saw it was because there were elderly people among them. Our gatherings loved only the young.

Dick was wearing his best suit in dark grey flannel. It was a very hot evening. His face was scarlet with endeavour and covered with sweat, which he kept sweeping off his forehead with impatient fingers. He was reading an impassioned document in tone rather like *The Communist Manifesto,* which began: "Fellow Citizens of Rhodesia! Sincere Men and Women! This is the Time for Action! Arise and look about you and enter into your Inheritance! Put the forces of International Capital to flight."

He was standing in front of one of the chairs, his well-brushed little head bent over his notes, which were handwritten and in places hard to read, so that these inflammatory sentiments were being stammered and stumbled out, while he kept correcting himself, wiping off sweat and then stopping with an appealing circular glance around the room at the others. Toward him were lifted ten earnest faces, as if at a saviour or a party leader.

The programme of this nascent Party was simple. It was to "take over by democratic means but as fast as possible" all the land and the industry of the country "but to cause as little inconvenience as possible" and "as soon as it was feasible" to institute a regime of true equality and fairness in this "land of Cecil Rhodes."

He was intoxicated by the emanations of admiration from his audience. Burning, passionate faces like these (alas, and I saw how far away we had sunk away from fervour) were no longer to be seen at our Left Club meetings, which long ago had sailed away on the agreeable tides of debate and intellectual speculation.

The faces belonged to a man of fifty or so, rather gray and

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beaten, who described himself as a teacher "planning the total reform of the entire educational system"; a woman of middle age, a widow, badly dressed and smoking incessantly, who looked as if she had long since gone beyond what she was strong enough to bear from life; an old man with an angelic pink face fringed with white tufts who said he was named after Keir Hardie; three schoolboys, the son of the widow and his two friends; the woman attendant from the ladies' cloakroom who had unlocked this room to set out the chairs and then had stayed out of interest, since it was her afternoon off; two airmen from the R.A.F.; Dick the convenor; and a beautiful young woman no one had ever seen before who, as soon as Dick had finished his manifesto, stood up to make a plea for vegetarianism. She was ruled out of order. "We have to get power first, and then we'll simply do what the majority wants." As for me, I was set apart from them by my lack of fervour, and by Dick's hostility.

This was in the middle of the Second World War, whose aim it was to defeat the hordes of National Socialism. The Union of Socialist Soviet Republics was thirty years old. It was more than a hundred and fifty years after the French Revolution, and rather less than that after the American Revolution which overthrew the tyrannies of Britain. The independence of India would shortly be celebrated. It was twenty years after the death of Lenin. Trotsky still lived.

One of the schoolboys, a friend of the widow's son, put up his hand to say timidly, instantly to be shut up, that "he believed there might be books which we could read about socialism and that sort of thing."

"Indeed there are," said the namesake of Keir Hardie, nodding his white locks, "but we needn't follow the writ that runs in other old countries, when we have got a brand new one here."

(It must be explained that the whites of Rhodesia, then as now, are always referring to "this new country.")

"As for books," said Dick, eyeing me with all the scornful self-command he had acquired since leaving his cushion weeks before on the floor of our living room, "books don't seem to do some people any good, so why do we need them? It is all perfectly simple. It isn't right for a few people to own all the wealth of a country. It

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isn't fair. It should be shared out among everybody, equally, and then that would be a democracy."

"Well obviously," said the beautiful girl.

"Ah yes," sighed the poor tired woman, emphatically crushing out her cigarette and lighting a new one.

"Perhaps it would be better if I just moved that palm a little," said the cloakroom attendant, "it does seem to be a little in your way perhaps." But Dick did not let her show her agreement in this way.

"Never mind about the palm," he said. "It's not important."

And this was the point when someone asked: "Excuse me, but where do the Natives come in?" (In those days, the Black inhabitants of Rhodesia were referred to as the Natives.)

This was felt to be in extremely bad taste.

"I don't really think that is is applicable," said Dick hotly. "I simply don't see the point of bringing it up at all — unless it is to make trouble."

"They do live here," said one of the R.A.F.

"Well, I must withdraw altogether if there's any likelihood of us getting mixed up with kaffir trouble," said the widow.

"You can be assured that there will be nothing of that," said Dick, firmly in control, in the saddle, leader of all, after only half an hour of standing up in front of his mass meeting.

"I don't see that," said the beautiful girl. "I simply don't see that at all! We must have a policy for the Natives."

Even twelve people in one small room, whether starting a mass Party or not, mean twelve different, defined, passionately held viewpoints. The meeting at last had to be postponed for a week to allow those who had not had a chance to air their views to have their say. I attended this second meeting. There were fifteen people present. The two R.A.F. were not there, but there were six white trade unionists from the railways, who, hearing of the new Party, had come to get a resolution passed. "In the opinion of this meeting, the Native is being advanced too fast toward civilisation and in his own interests the pace should be slowed."

This resolution was always being passed in those days, on every possible occasion. It probably still is.

But the nine from the week before were already able to form

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a solid block against this influx of alien thought — not as champions of the Natives, of course not, but because it was necessary to attend to first things first. "We have to take over the country first, by democratic methods. That won't take long, because it is obvious our programme is only fair, and after that we can decide what to do about the Natives." The six railway workers then left, leaving the nine from last week, who proceeded to form their Party for Democracy, Liberty and Socialism. A steeering committee of three was appointed to draft a constitution.

And that was the last anyone ever heard of it, except for one cyclostyled pamphlet which was called "Capitalism is Unfair. Let's Join Together to Abolish it. This Means You!"

The war was over. Intellectual ferments of this sort occurred no more. Employees of the post office, all once again good citizens properly employed in sport and similar endeavours, no longer told the citizens in what ways they were censored and when.

Dick did not stay in the Post Office. That virus, politics, was in his veins for good. From being a spokesman for socialism for the whites, he became, as a result of gibes that he couldn't have socialism that excluded most of the population, an exponent of the view that natives must not be advanced too fast in their own interests, and from there he developed into a Town Councillor, and from there into a Member of Parliament. And that is what he still is, a gentleman of distinguished middle age, an indefatigable server on Parliamentary Committees and Commissions, particularly those to do with the Natives, on whom he is considered an authority.

An elderly bulldog of the bulldog breed he is, every inch of him.

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# AMERICA II, Continued

*William Appleman Williams's response to the comments on his reading of American history by Michael Harrington, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. and Howard Zinn* (PR *#4, 1970*), *and Mr. Harrington's and Mr. Schlesinger's replies, continue* PR*'s discussion of what's happening to America. Readers' comments are invited.*

## William Appleman Williams

Thank you for taking the book seriously.

Let me begin with some thoughts about Howard Zinn's comments, then consider various specific criticisms and conclude with a reply to Michael Harrington's concern that I am too pessimistic.

Zinn states his major point on page 521, asserting that I make at best a weak connection between my objective (helping the reader revaluate and change his awareness) and my reconstruction and analysis. He leaves me unpersuaded for several reasons. I can get at one of them by exploring his kind and generous praise for *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* as effortlessly relevant and his criticism of *The Roots* as strained and, in the end, irrelevant. He overlooks, it seems to me, the important consideration that they are different kinds of books.

Any book has to be approached, and to a significant degree understood, in terms of three criteria: what the author is trying to do; with what audience is he trying to establish a dialogue; and where, in the development of his exploration of the subject, he is making those efforts. The answers to those questions are quite different for *The Tragedy* and *The Roots*. *The Tragedy* came at the end of a decade of extensive and intensive research that had been worked over in lectures, in conversations with students and colleagues, in monographic and popular articles and in an extremely detailed book on *American-Russian Relations: 1784-1947*. *The Tragedy* was the result of stepping back and deciding to write an analytical and interpretative essay directed to the *general public*.

I seriously considered writing a similar book from the research, discussion and thought that provides the underpinning for *The Roots*. The perceptive reader, I am sure, can see the skeleton (and even a bit more) of such an essay in the introduction to *The Roots*. That approach might have produced a better book per se, as well as one more

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effortlessly "relevant," in Zinn's sense of the phrase. The reasons I decided against that course can be reviewed in terms of Zinn's models of the Radical and the Professional Historian. I am unconvinced by his models because they are not models in any rigorous sense: his paragraph about the Professional, for example, is merely a series of assertions about how a Professional may be presumed to think and act. In a similar way, his criteria for the Radical have been met in practice by a number of historians who were or are liberals — and even some conservatives.

But let me use Zinn's Radical Model (p. 523) as a basis for explaining why I decided not to do *The Roots* as an essay. First consider what his Radical is about: to discover and communicate information and analyses that will help a citizen "gain such an awareness that he might be induced to change his ideas and work to transform the government's" policies. Then review points three and four: "learning what *interests* were involved" and "learning how the above facts were mystified by national leadership, how they became a generally accepted mythology. . . ." There is nothing there, or elsewhere in his model, that blocks Zinn's Radical Historian from concerning himself with *the existing radical awareness* of his chosen subject, as well as with the liberal or conservative awareness — or with the unawareness of others.

Now one of the most persistent characteristics of radical awareness about imperialism involves a propensity to conceptualize in terms of the powerful minority (or elite) and the manipulated majority. There is much evidence for this analysis in many situations, and I have found it wholly convincing in such cases. But the data will not support that interpretation in some instances, and in others it is clear that the majority is being controlled through the manipulation of ideas, ideals, beliefs and symbols which it has done much to generate and sanctify as dogma.

As I attempted to explain in my preface (not too effectively, it appears), my continuing research into the growing manipulation of the majority by the metropolitan minority during the twentieth century kept turning up agriculturalist rhetoric and action that increasingly engaged my attention and concern. I came to question the radical (my own) awareness which held that the agriculturalists were antiimperialists as well as anticolonialists. Which is to say that Zinn's Radical Historian is subversive of the radical awareness at any given moment. Indeed, his model would have no claim on our attention if it did not generate that result.

The more research I did, the more I became convinced that the existing radical awareness (as well as that of other groups) was seriously mistaken in this instance. I decided it would be useful to present the

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evidence (and my reasoning) in considerable detail, even at the risk of limiting the general appeal of the book. That approach may have made the book more academic than desirable, but I cannot accept Zinn's judgment that my work itself is "primarily of academic interest." For if one wants to help build a social movement, then it is crucial to know a great deal more than we do about the *Weltanschauung* of the majority. Particularly when the key equation used by the elite to mystify and manipulate the majority emerges as a central belief which in large measure was generated and sanctified by the majority.

It may be possible to stop a war, or to effect domestic reforms, without destroying the belief in that equation; but it is not possible to make a social revolution without understanding the deep roots of that belief. For to persuade people either to give up their *Weltanschauung* and join a movement for such fundamental change, or to agree to such change, the radical has to confront their *Weltanschauung* as it exists: he must accept it as a basis for initiating the dialogue in order to change it in the course of the dialogue.

Zinn speaks briefly to this point (pp. 522-23), but then dismisses my efforts. Were I convinced, I would accept the judgment. But I am not. I think I do offer much to explain how the belief in a causal relationship between freedom and an expanding marketplace evolved out of a reality experienced by a large number of Americans during a particular period; how that belief became dogma; and how the dogma was manipulated by an industrial elite to extend and consolidate a global empire (as well as to gain and hold domestic power) long after the reality had changed.

Nor am I persuaded by Zinn's final criticisms. If we are as radicals to honor his Radical Model, then we have no choice but to be schizophrenic about our radical consciousness. We have to act on it as it stands, but we must simultaneously explore it with as much critical rigor as we can muster. And, finally, if I demonstrate, as I consider that I have done, that a *Weltanschauung* tying freedom to capitalistic marketplace expansion produces imperialism, then I think I have logically confronted the reader with two questions: is not that outlook inherently contradictory, and would it therefore not be useful for you to consider the wisdom (to say nothing of the existential pragmatics) of redefining freedom so that is is not dependent upon private property, the capitalist marketplace and imperialism?

Zinn offers one specifically historical criticism (p. 522) that speaks to a significant point. I am not persuaded by his charge that my evidence "is clearly from the bigger farm businessmen." Some of it is, but much of it is not. Even where it is, he neglects the element of social

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consciousness. A farmer may be small potatoes in statistical terms, but if he sees himself as a commercial farmer then he responds to — and even mimics — the arguments and policies of the statistically significant farmer.

But his point about "subsistence farmers, migrant farm laborers, tenant farmers, sharecroppers" and "the black farm population" is important. All I can say is that I did the best I could with my energy, my economic resources and my time. I grant it was not enough. I would suggest, however, that the subsistence farmers, at least as I encountered them, inclined very strongly to think and act in terms of their aspirations — they wanted to become successful commercial farmers. The same holds for the man just emerging from subsistence (Zinn's producer for the village) and for the tenants and sharecroppers I encountered.

Whatever my differences with Zinn, he does understand and acknowledge that I am at least struggling with the problem of the interrelationship between ideas and economics. Not so with Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. The difficulties of a dialogue with him (he who is *so* concerned about words and style) are nicely revealed by his misplaced italics in making the charge that I reduce everything to one thing. He stresses the *The* in the title of my book, whereas the actionable letter is the *s* on *Roots*.

But let us consider the grand judgment itself (p. 507): "Professor Williams insists that imperialism is totally reducible to economic motives." A sense of humor is essential equipment for reading Schlesinger, for it enables one to keep much of his hyperbole and verbal gingerbread in perspective. But in cases like this humor is not enough: the issue involves his failure to understand what he has read. If his statement means anything, it asserts that I explain *all* expansionist ideas and actions by tracing them back to some individual's drive to make, maintain or increase his profits — or to avoid a loss.

No doubt of it, I have accounted for various foreign policy proposals and actions in such terms, and I see no reason to hedge or retract those analyses or interpretations. But I have also written pages on "The Imperialism of Idealism" as an important element in understanding American foreign relations, I have been damned with a fervor equal to Schlesinger's for being an idealist instead of a materialist, and in the book under discussion have gone into considerable detail to show how, as he phrases it (p. 506), a "confusion of a belief in free markets with a belief in freedom" developed in American history.

Perhaps Schlesinger's misconception can be illustrated by considering one of his specifics. He asserts (p. 509) that I try "to force the Populist platform of 1892 into the overseas-markets straitjacket." First, a review of my position as I presented it in *The Roots* (perhaps

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a weakness in the index accounts for his judgment). On the basis of having explored the market expansionist outlook and proposals of various individuals and groups that began in the late eighteen-eighties to coalesce as the Populist movement, I open a discussion of that development on page 329. I first detail the intimate relationship between the subtreasury proposal and marketplace expansion. Then I return (pp. 334-35) to a major theme: the foreign policy aspects of the agitation for silver.

Next (pp. 338-39), I indicate how the Ocala Conference integrated those issues into its demands, along with the related agitation for transportation reforms and for action against alien landowners. (A digression on the last point: the antialien ownership movement did involve economic motives, but I also relate it to foreign policy because of its relation to the frontier thesis, and its role in defining the nation's rivals and in intensifying nationalist spirit. All those considerations involve ideas and psychology.) Returning to Populist leaders (pp. 345-46), I offer an explicit formulation of James Kyle's silver-market–expansionist argument, and a detailed review of Jerry Simpson's involvement with market expansionism and the frontier thesis.

That is the background for any discussion of the foreign policy aspects of the Populist platform of 1892 (pp. 352-53). All the issues and arguments here reviewed were in that platform. I stand on the evidence, on my analysis and on what I said in the Introduction (p. 34): "Much of the Populist program . . . derived from agriculture's long emphasis on foreign markets." Schlesinger describes all that as trying "to force the Populist platform of 1892 into the overseas-markets straitjacket." I suggest that his analysis of my account is far wider of the mark than my analysis of what happened.

Schlesinger offers a bit of almost everything. (Some of it is not worth serious attention, and because of space limitations I am restricting my comments to points that bear directly on *The Roots*.) Consider, for example, his extreme literal-mindedness in reading President Grover Cleveland's 17 December 1895 message on the Venezuela boundary crisis (p. 509): if a document does not contain the word *market*, then apparently for Schlesinger it cannot be a manifestation of analyzing a situation (or proposing action) on the basis of a marketplace conception of the world. (The answer to his rhetorical question, incidentally, is in my book and in another volume he cites on page 508 — Walt LaFeber's *The New Empire*.)

Or examine Schlesinger's comments on Marx, Marxism and imperialism. If we go to his citation, the careful study by Shiomo Avineri, we discover a rather different (and more accurate) presentation of what Schlesinger calls (p. 507) Marx's relatively "benign view" of imperial-

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ism. Alvineri describes Marx (pp. 2-3) as "singing, tongue in cheek, the praises of the bourgeoisie" for — in Marx's words — making "barbarian and semi-barbarian countries dependent on the civilized ones, nations of peasants on nations of bourgeois." (Also see Alvineri, pp. 16-17, 22.) As for Schlesinger's proposition that Lenin "promulgated the 'Marxist' theory of imperialism" — that must be a put-on. Surely he knows that Otto Bauer, Rudolf Hilferding and Rosa Luxemburg were the major Marxian theorists of imperialism. (I am not as "innocent of any interest" in such matters as he asserts.)

Schlesinger lays his greatest stress on this proposition: my analysis is wrecked by a "total disregard of the strategic and political motives in American imperial policy" (p. 511). He opens his argument with the orthodox statistical gambit, noting correctly that the largest American markets were in Europe. Like a good many other commentators, Schlesinger seems to think that this fact disproves the importance of economic motives and even the significance of economically-oriented thought. It does nothing of the kind.

In the first place, the effort to enlarge other markets motivated a large number of men who influenced the making of foreign policy. Their calculations and expectations may have been fanciful, at least in their time, and may indeed never have been realized, but that is beside the point in understanding their behavior. Second, aggregate statistical data is a gross and unreliable guide to the actions of individuals and firms. One or two big operators splashing around in small markets have generated major policy troubles. For that matter, some shopkeeper types have caused serious difficulties. Finally, one of the main themes of *The Roots* involves the very situation that Schlesinger describes: the long- as well as the short-term impact on American policy of farm businessmen's involvement in the European market.

Schlesinger discusses political motives in terms of "the passion for political domination" (p. 511); and, relying heavily on Joseph Schumpeter's essay on imperialism, presents those men he calls "our true expansionists — Seward, Mahan, Lodge, Roosevelt, for example," as being concerned with "the international power competition," "*raisons d'état*" and "the power and glory of the nation" (pp. 512, 513, 515). Such men are placed in Schumpeter's "warrior class," an analysis which does offer some limited insight into a few members of what I have called the metropolitan minority, and which in other books and articles dealing with their activities I have given the weight I consider appropriate.

But Schlesinger slides over the way all such men — warriors or no — conceptualized American foreign policy by accepting capitalism, ac-

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knowledging the necessity of marketplace expansion to sustain the economy and not questioning the way in which traditional political theory ties individual freedom to a prosperous capitalist political economy. If Roosevelt and Lodge, for example, had been anticapitalist, he might have a case. But their tactical rhetoric against businessmen never became strategic leadership against capitalism.

Those men did not have an actionable personal economic motive in pushing American expansion, but economics was nevertheless at the center of their thinking about foreign policy. They periodically sneered at the entrepreneur, but they persistently concerned themselves with the kind of imperial action that would sustain the marketplace economy. Schlesinger also bypasses my explicit discussion of the way in which metropolitan leaders used the marketplace-expansionist argument to maintain their political power. Far from disregarding political motives, I place them at the center of my account when the evidence points to that analysis (as on p. 32, where I speak directly to the points that Schlesinger asserts I ignore).

Having once invoked the strategic motive Schlesinger largely ignores it. Strategy involves a very specific question: how, given a conception of national requirements and interests, does one formulate a military policy that will protect or advance those needs and objectives? I offered in *The Roots* a rather detailed review of how, as the overseas-market analysis of the American economy gained acceptance, the security perimeter and other aspects of strategy were redefined to fit that new conception of the requirements and interests of the political economy. The navy became the top service arm because it was the instrument of force most appropriate to a conception of American interests as worldwide, and the insular acquisitions (and some of the other spheres of influence) were viewed as military outposts as well as economic springboards.

To go a bit further, the term "strategic motive" is a slippery combination of words, and it is necessary to handle it carefully. Let us suppose a nation whose *Weltanschauung* does not consider expansion beyond its home territory as either necessary or desirable. It is content to conduct its trade on terms mutually agreeable to the parties concerned. A leader of that nation deciding to acquire external territory *solely* for the purpose of improving the military security of his country against foreign attack could fairly be said to be acting on a strategic motive. But it is extremely difficult to find such cases. Seward's effort to buy the Danish West Indies is perhaps the best one (though Seward's conception of continental security was clearly linked to his imperial plans).

To be sure, Americans have often invoked the rhetoric and justifica-

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tion of strategic need. But time after time the claim crumbles in the examination. Sometimes it has been a rationalization for not wanting strong neighbors (a revealing insight into ourselves), sometimes it has been used as a disguise or mask for other motives, and in still other instances it has been marched forward in defense of the empire. But to talk about a strategic motive in *protecting* the empire fudges the question about the role of a strategic motive in *acquiring* the empire.

I think I have offered more than enough to refute Schlesinger's assertion that I reduce American imperialism (or foreign policy in general) to economic motives. Perhaps our impasse arises from his failure to distinguish between an economic motive, an economic idea and a conception of American welfare (and the proper policies to sustain that welfare) which is based upon a *Weltanschauung* that integrates the idea of individual freedom and fulfillment with one specific political economy. As for the relationship between the *Weltanschauung* evolved by the agriculturalists and twentieth-century foreign policy, I do not think that Schlesinger is any more convincing than Zinn in denying the causal connection.

Michael Harrington understands more clearly than Schlesinger what I am about, and I find his comments more significant. The first thing to say in response to his charge that my treatment of the Populists is "one-sided" (p. 500) is simply that I should have been more explicit about my awareness of their concern and agitation for domestic reforms. Such a commentary was in an early draft, but I took it out because it struck me as unnecessary in a book so clearly about foreign policy (and directed toward a limited audience). Ah, so: I was wrong.

In the broader sense, however, I modified my view of the Populists in the course of my research and reflection. Earlier, I would have agreed (at least in general) with Harrington's view. But I now think that there is much less true radicalism in what Richard Hofstadter and Harrington call the "soft" side of Populism, and I think that the "hard" side prevailed long before the twentieth-century agitation for parity. Silver was not simply an ideology, for example; nor did the subtreasury plan involve a turn away from the world marketplace; and southern Populists *were* strongly engaged in the agitation for market expansion. Neither do I think that I ignore the other components that went into the evolution of their imperial position. As for some Populists' later turn to socialism, that was beyond the scope of my effort (though I consider it a vital question for the Left and did point to it in my book).

Turning to Harrington's emphasis on the rise of industrialism and urbanism, I think he confuses a trend with an existing reality. I agree with the point about the trend, but do not agree that the metropolitan

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minority was therefore a sure thing. One of the themes I tried to develop (and stress) concerned not only the unstable nature of politics during the period, but the rising awareness among members of the metropolitan minority that they could lose their chance to dominate the situation. Those men did not have Harrington's sense of certainty, and I think they were closer to the truth.

I did deal, though perhaps neither as explicitly nor as extensively as desirable, with the failure of the agricultural majority to consolidate and deploy its majority political power. That was one of the two vital factors in the ability of the metropolitan minority to hang on until it established the control it required to shape the structure of the evolving political economy according to its preferences. The other element was the strategy of co-opting a decisive element of the agricultural majority by advocating market expansion. I would suggest, moreover, that American imperialism would have blossomed at a significantly later date if it had not been for the long agricultural commitment to overseas market expansion.

But if we say, as Harrington seems to be saying, that the outcome was predetermined simply because the metropolitan elite controlled what were to become the predominate means of production, then we are left — at least implicitly — with the proposition that a majority cannot control or shape a trend. I disagree. I think the possibilities open to a majority are defined by its conception of reality, by its self-consciousness and by its strength as a social movement. Let me put it this way: if the Populist minority which stressed domestic reform had won the active support of their fellow agriculturalists, then, despite industrialization and urbanization, American society would be significantly different.

A related point before moving on to Harrington's remarks about more recent events. I do not argue in *The Roots* that the agrarian majority was a "creative" force in connection with foreign policy (p. 502). I do maintain, as Harrington points out more correctly a bit earlier, that it exercised "a profound influence upon another class." There is a vast difference between being influential and being creatively influential. I do not think that my analysis can be changed with generating "militant imprecision" (p. 503), precisely because of that consideration. For what we have here is a majority causally involved in pointing the society away from its primary values and problems. And, as I noted in responding to Zinn, our awareness of that reality ought to suggest to us that simplistic slogans and occasional fiery acts are not the key to building a radical social movement which wants to redirect the energies and the commitments of the society.

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Nor do I think that my writings on the Cold War argue (or imply) that Russia was simply "the (innocent) reactor" in a stimulus-response model of foreign relations. There are several issues here: the first can be discussed around that word "innocent." I do not think Russia "innocent" in any relevant sense: it is not the glorious model for an American revolution, and it neither withdrew to its prewar boundaries nor constructed model socialist societies in the countries it came to dominate. I do not know any one of "all the other revisionist historians of the Cold War" — if I understand the group Harrington means — who would disagree with that sentence. Assuming that the obvious is obvious, we aren't breast-beaters.

But I would insist, along with the revisionists, that passing judgment on the nature of Soviet society or behavior is not the same thingh as defining the central issues involved in writing the history of the Cold War. Those judgments are important only where they can be shown to have motivated various individuals and groups, and this I have dealt with in other places. I would add, however, that *The Roots* does offer help in understanding the role of those judgments (including their use as a tool of manipulation) at different times in the twentieth century. The primary questions about the Cold War concern who held determining power, how it was used (and why) and how that influenced Russian action.

I do not see how anyone can any longer argue seriously that the Soviet Union was at that point more powerful than the United States. It was economically depleted, psychologically exhausted and confronted by a nation whose economic system was unrivaled and which was not only armed with nuclear weapons, but had used them. Russia did have a precarious hold on Eastern Europe, but it faced serious opposition there as it did in Asia. And American leaders, as well as the Soviets, were aware of those relative and absolute weaknesses.

Hence we move on to the question of how America deployed its power, and why it applied it in the way it did. Here, surprisingly, Harrington offers a variation of Schlesinger's thesis: he assumes we revisionists are Leninists, that we use the Leninist model of imperialism. Again, I do not know any of us who rely on that crude tool. That, precisely, is why I become very skeptical when Harrington asserts that economic exploitation "of the ex-colonies has, with the large but not decisive exception of the empire of oil, been less and less important with each year since World War II" (p. 503); when he reiterates Schlesinger's point about nineteenth-century trade with Europe in terms of twentieth-century investment (p. 504); and when he states flatly that America

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"did not *need* a cold war as the only way of avoiding a depression" (p. 504).

The Third World is not made up of ex-colonies only, and hence any balance sheet of exploitation based on that partial accounting does not speak to either of the issues involved: 1) American imperialism is based on market expansion, not colonialism, and the record of America's economic relationship with the Third World disproves Harrington; and 2) capitalism must be judged against its theoretical and moral promise to improve *all* elements in the marketplace. Surely by now we all have read Gunnar Myrdal, Thomas Balogh and Harry Magdoff. And granted the corporations concentrate more in Europe than elsewhere: that does not refute the fact of the American empire. It would seem to pose a problem only for those who are hung-up on Lenin. The issue is the nature and dynamic of the American empire, *not* the validity of Lenin's thesis.

For similar reasons, I am very uneasy with Harrington's statement about America not needing a cold war to avoid a depression. If he is speaking theoretically, then I agree with him. One can theorize that America could have become a continental-sized Sweden (and wish it had), though to build that model we would have to begin changing reality along about 1865. But if he means that American capitalism *as it existed* did not need a cold war, then we part company. Just as we do over his assertion that American capitalism (or neo-capitalism) *has built* a welfare state. I cannot, for example, agree that America has a welfare state in any meaningful sense when the benefits are so intimately related to the dynamics of imperial expansion — to say nothing of the limited and uneven nature of the welfare (here I would begin by citing Harrington's magnificent book on poverty). It would be closer to the truth, meaning reality, to say that America's twentieth-century metropolitan rulers had reluctantly accepted enough of the concept and measures of a welfare state to muddle through the patchwork creation of a *survival* state.

But the point in connection with foreign policy is that Harrington's remark about not needing a cold war is like arguing that the late nineteenth–century agriculturalists did not need market expansion leading to imperialism to solve their problems. Agreed. Then the question becomes, if America did not need the cold war, why did it opt for that choice? Of course there are reasons why the United States did not go another route. But we revisionists are concerned with why it did. And I do not answer that question solely in terms of the fear of a depression. I have written about the euphoric sense of power generated by a mono-

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poly of nuclear weapons, and the positive concern (not at all unlike that of the nineteenth–century agriculturalists) to sustain and improve America by integrating it even further into the world marketplace. I have also pointed out that some Americans were moralistic crusaders, and that a number of them feared the radical challenge to capitalism.

So back to the "innocence" of Russia. The historical question comes down to this: did American leaders, fully aware of their great relative and absolute strength, make a rational, appropriate response to the Russian incursion into Eastern Europe, one that had some chance of decreasing rather than intensifying its impact; or did they grossly misunderstand and distort the Russian action, turning it into a massive and direct threat to the security of the United States because of the way they had come to define the requirements, interests and objectives of the American political economy? I think the evidence overwhelmingly supports the latter explanation.

And I think that my history has far, far less to do with any pessimism among the young than the persistence of that attitude and approach to world affairs among the nation's leadership, and (at least until very recently) a sizable plurality of its citizens. I want again to suggest that the left's share of the fault lies elsewhere, in the assumption that we can have radical reform or a social revolution without the hard, dedicated and effective work involved in building a social movement.

Measured against that assumption, I suppose my book could be called pessimistic. I point to no buttons to press, and I do not indicate that the grass will become greener if only we recline upon it. I simply argue that my book is realistic if we really want what we say we want. We have to know more about how our neighbors think and feel, and we have to offer them more than we have, if we are to become their brothers and sisters. Or even if we are simply to become in their minds and hearts those nuts next door with whom they will go along.

## Michael Harrington

I have contrasting criticisms of William Appleman Williams on the two points in his comment to which I want to reply: in the case of his analysis of the problem of the majority within ascendant capitalism he is not at all Marxist enough; with regard to imperialism he is, if unwittingly, too orthodox a Leninist.

Williams argues that if the history of imperialism was "predetermined simply because the metropolitan elite controlled what were to become the predominant means of production, then we are left — at

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least implicitly — with the proposition that a majority cannot control or shape a trend." He disagrees: ". . . if the Populist minority which stressed domestic reform had won the active support of their fellow agriculturalists, then, despite industrialization and urbanization, American society would be significantly different.

The fact is that, under capitalism, the economic and social power of a minority, the owners of the means of production, is so great that the majority, despite substantial concessions to political democracy, does not rule. The notion that an essentially agrarian coalition could transform this structure was the great dream of American radicalism in the nineteenth century — and it played a crucial role in retarding the development of a working-class socialist alternative by diverting the attention of the urban masses to rural utopias. For precisely those factors which were necessary to the growth of "industrialization and urbanization" — the concentration of capital and finance, the rail network, etc., were inimical to the farmers. On this point, then, I think that Williams has been seduced by his subjects and should be more Marxist (the scholarly might look up Marx's polemics against Kriege in the eighteen-forties, one of the most subtle and prescient treatments of this issue ever written).

But on the more basic, and political, issue of imperialism I find William Appleman Williams an unwitting, and even unwilling, Leninist. He argues that America needed a cold war if it were to avoid a depression. But why, then, did the most successful and uniquely endowed capitalist system in history labor under such a requirement? Why did it have to expand its market? The only answer would seem to be that there was some structural drive in that direction. It could not possibly be offset by expanding to other, less successful, advanced capitalisms because they would be even more driven to expansion than the United States. Therefore, not colonialism, but the imperial struggle for markets and raw materials in the non- or pre-capitalist world would become a necessity for all capitalist societies. And in one form or another every serious Marxist theory of imperialism — Kautsky's, Lenin's, Luxembourg's and so on — made that point.

Williams shares the Leninist premise — the structural need for expansion — and the Leninist conclusion — the theory of imperialism — but he does not fill in the more specific analysis. (In Lenin's version, the decrease in the rate, and the increase in the mass, of surplus value caused by the changes in the organic and technical composition of capital respectively made the export of surplus a structural imperative.) I think Lenin wrong.

What has happened is not, of course, a "Swedish" variant of American capitalism. That is obviously an impossibility. Rather, the manifest-

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ly imperfect and outrageously class-dominated welfare states which appeared in the Western world after World War II did, for all their inadequacies, raise the level of mass consumption and provide outlets for the investments of surplus value undreamed of in the Leninist philosophy. It is for that reason that investment and exploitation in the Third World have been of declining significance for advanced capitalism for a generation (the imperial exception of oil being understood).

I do not believe then that the American welfare state is dependent upon the dynamics of imperial expansion. Its greatest development, after all, took place after that most famous of markets, China, was taken out of the capitalist sphere. The source of the American welfare state is basically the unprecedented development of capitalist technology in this country, Europe and Japan. That metropolitan elite, alas, has been more resourceful than the left had anticipated. It is also choking to death on unplanned affluence and provoking global violence, but that is another story.

And finally, the Williams thesis is pessimistic. If American is structurally fated to global wrongdoing then only a mass movement of the radical left capable of basic transformation of domestic power relationships can make decent international departures a possibility. Since such a development is not exactly imminent, the overly rigid analysis of imperialism logically leads to quietism. It is to William Appleman Williams's credit that he rejects the implications of his own position and insists upon "the hard, dedicated and effective work involved in building a social movement." It is because I share that conviction with him that I hope my criticisms have been not simply trenchant but fraternal as well.

## Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.

Professor Williams begins that part of his rejoinder addressed to me with a ringing denial of my suggestion that he regards imperialism as totally reducible to economic motives. Much of the rest of his rejoinder constitutes, so far as I can see, a rather methodical, if unconscious, verification of my point. His abiding claim, implicit in all his books and explicit in this rejoinder, is that political and strategic motives — i.e., the desire to secure national power as something different from the desire to enlarge corporate profits — really have no independent existence; that they are, as Pareto might have said, derivations rather than residues. Professor Williams thus terms the invocation of political and strategic grounds for action as, most of the time, "a rationalization . . . a disguise or mask for other motives." In fact, he

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tells us that he finds it "extremely difficult" even to conceive of cases where national leaders "could fairly be said to be acting on a strategic motive." This argument that strategic motives are almost always derivative from economic motives is hardly astonishing to any of Professor Williams's readers. What is astonishing is that, after making this argument, he then has the intellectual incoherence to write in the next paragraph, "I think I have offered more than enough to refute Schlesinger's assertion that I reduce American imperialism (or foreign policy in general) to economic motives." Does not Professor Williams ever read his own prose?

Whatever his protestations, Professor Williams does of course reduce American foreign policy to economic motives in every concrete instance. His reference to page 32 of *The Roots of the Modern American Empire,* which he cites in his rejoinder as proof that he understands the autonomy of political motives, proves in fact his unswerving belief in the dependence of the political on the economic motive. He writes, "Blaine and Harrison did not want power for its own sake. . . . They sought it in order to act upon a broad policy of overseas economic expansion that they considered necessary and desirable for the entire political economy as well as for specific interests within it." He mentions a chapter on "The Imperialism of Idealism" in *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* but neglects to mention that most of the chapter is devoted to — guess what? — foreign markets and that "idealism" is defined as a creed promoted by the need to expand American capitalism. Thus Williams writes of a diplomatic document of the period: "That document establishes once and for all the connection between, and the convergence of, the drive for overseas economic expansion and the urge to reform other societies. . . . It likewise removes any doubt about whether or not American leaders were conscious of the relationship."

He can even, incredibly, write of Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge that "economics was . . . at the center of their thinking about foreign policy." This is manifest nonsense, and no one would have been more insulted by it than Roosevelt himself. He did not believe in the free market at home (this was his great argument with Wilson in 1912), nor is there evidence that he cared about the expansion of the American marketplace abroad except as it might be a means toward the increase of the power of the national state. Howard K. Beale, whom even the New Left can hardly dismiss as a conservative historian, has written the most comprehensive and careful account of Theodore Roosevelt and foreign affairs. As he correctly puts it, "The Roosevelt-Lodge expansionists who took the American people into an imperialist struggle for world power were not primarily concerned with American eco-

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nomic interests around the world. Nor did they attempt to justify expansion chiefly on economic grounds. Where they were interested in economic matters it was because economic advantages won converts to imperialist policies or enhanced the prestige of the country. . . . The primary concern of Roosevelt and his fellow-expansionists was power and prestige and the naval strength that would bring power and prestige" (*Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power*).

Can Professor Williams really not see the difference between the search for profits and the search for power? Let me try, once more, to make the point to him, as simply as possible. Williams argues that, if the United States had not been a capitalist country, it would not have engaged in the quest for empire. But let us suppose — all you graduate students out there — that the United States had never been a capitalist country. Let us suppose it had begun as a communist country, with private and corporate profit thereby eliminated as a motive, like the Soviet Union. Would the United States have been any less determined to expand across the continent? Would it have been any less determined to exclude extracontinental powers from the hemisphere through somthing like the Monroe Doctrine? Would it have been any less interested in dominating Central America or extending its influence into South America? To put the issue in more contemporary terms, would a Soviet United States have been any less determined to prevent a hostile power from another continent from setting up nuclear missile bases in Cuba? Political and strategic motives have an autonomy of their own, absolutely regardless of systems of economic ideology or ownership.

Professor Williams obviously cannot afford to incorporate this truism into his analysis of imperialism, first, because it would undermine his theory that capitalism is the source of all evil, and, second, because it would expose the fact that noncapitalist states had imperialist propensities. This is why, for example, he must keep representing the military as the servants of the capitalists; as he wrote in *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy,* "The military had not even by 1962 established themselves in an independent and superior position." Next to General Westmoreland, no one is more eager to exculpate the generals. But surely it is precisely because of the independent influence of the military in both the United States and the Soviet Union that these countries have pursued their crazy policies of recent years. Was it the American business community that demanded the escalation of the war in Indochina?

I am glad to see that Professor Williams at least does not attempt to justify his persistent effort to distort the meaning of the word "em-

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pire" as used in early American political literature. I trust he will abandon such unscrupulous philological adventures in the future. His suggestion that Cleveland was acting on behalf of the American business community in the Venezuela crisis may be sufficiently refuted by reminding him of Theodore Roosevelt's comment: "Outside the moneyed interests in New York and Boston, the American people, like Congress and the press, are solidly behind the President in defense of the Monroe Doctrine." His explanation of the fact that the Populist platform of 1892 did not mention foreign markets could hardly be more feeble. In his book Professor Williams argues for several hundred pages that American agriculturalists in the last half of the nineteenth century thought of nothing but foreign markets. Then the People's Party arose in 1892 as the national culmination of a generation of agrarian discontent. Nearly 1300 Populist delegates adopted a platform at Omaha in 1892 — a document of 2500 words into which the embattled farmers poured their analyses, grievances and nostrums. Yet not a resolution, not a plank, not a word about foreign markets! Only an historian not merely obsessed but blinded by his thesis could fail to regard this omission as worthy of note. That the omission was hardly accidental can be suggested by the fact that the Populists did not mention foreign markets either in their platforms of 1896, 1900, 1904 or 1908.

I regret most of all that Professor Williams still flinches from taking up the very serious intellectual challenge that must result from any effort to make sense of his position — that is, what he really thinks about foreign trade. In *The Roots of the Modern American Empire* he writes as if every expression of a desire to sell or exchange domestic products in other countries were evidence of original sin. Students who read his tracts come away with the idea that anyone who talks of foreign markets must display, by definition, the brand of Old Nick. Yet Professor Williams continually refuses to tell us what, if he had been President at any point in the nineteenth or twentieth centuries, he would have done. If multilateralism is so vicious, how, if at all, would Professor Williams have us conduct foreign trade?

I do note a significant admission in a recent letter to the *New York Review of Books* (28 January 1971). Here Professor Williams, after his volumes of theology about the iniquity of foreign markets, suddenly writes: "international trade [i.e., foreign markets] will be an essential part of a drastically reformed or revolutionary America . . . and the problems of controlling the political ramifications of major trade patterns are not unique to capitalism." If Professor Williams has the intellectual honesty to pursue the implications of this admission, he would considerably improve both his analysis and his history.

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Norman Birnbaum

# CIRCUS AT VARNA

What could be more attractive than a conference — the eighth postwar World Congress in Sociology — in Varna, a sea resort set in olive groves on the Black Sea coast. To the attractions of nature was added the prospect of the first large, public encounter between "bourgeois" sociology and its orthodox Marxist counterpart, against the backdrop of a "developing" state socialist society. The whole thing, however, was a barely mitigated disaster. But it all can best be understood in the context of the course of sociology since 1945.

The dizzy postwar expansion of sociology as an academic field (I hesitate to use the term "discipline," for good philosophical reasons) is reflected in the attendance figures for successive international gatherings. The first one I attended, at Liège in 1953, had some 300 participants. At Amsterdam in 1956 there were already about 500 sociologists, and at Stresa in 1959 there were over a thousand. At Washington in 1962 the number was higher still, and by the time the Evian conference was held in 1966 there were over 2,000 present. Even though the Bulgarians threw in by official count 501 persons, many of them ridicuously unqualified, the throng at Varna numbered 4,000.

Over the past twenty-five years sociology has grown in the U.S.A. and Western Europe from similar roots. Initially, the catastrophes of fascism and war and the problems of reconstruction gave rise to a general political introspection. But the constriction of postwar western politics and the suspension of disbelief in the capitalist machine turned introspection into apologetics. Instead of asking how society could be made whole and rational, sociologists portrayed its fragmentation and senselessness as inevitable. Those who sought something else were dismissed as "utopians" by those who fancied themselves in possession (or about to come into it) of immutable laws of behavior, of higher insight into the necessary and beneficial constraints of social structures. Rapidly

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emptied of critical ideas, sociology soon lost all intellectual content: it became a set of techniques for gathering data. The techniques were useful, not least to those in command of those corporate and government bureaucracies which set such narrow limits on our political choices. Sociologists became minor ancillaries of the administrative technologists: they presented their instruments of inquiry as aspects of a pure science, if a nascent one, even though their work served very impure purposes.

Not all of sociology, however, was self-consciously technical. Serious efforts were made in the United States to develop abstract criteria for sociological analysis and general models of society, though these, too, were subject to political assumptions. The abstract criteria often dealt with social constraints as "functions," as mechanical necessities imposed on men and not as historical forms which could be criticized and changed. In fact, the models frequently presupposed a consensus which they had helped bring about. In Europe, a serious and desperate search to relate the Marxist tradition to contemporary social and political phenomena began as soon as it became clear that wartime antifascism had not been the prelude to a socialist Europe. The reluctance of the European working class to assume a revolutionary mission led to studies of psychic coercion: briefly, the process of alienation was now seen not only in the fragmentation of man as citizen and producer but in the willed servitude of a new generation of consumers. Meanwhile, phenomenologists looked beyond politics for a human essence. They sometimes found it, not just beyond politics, but beyond community, and so reduced social existence to a giant charade.

The multiplicity of Western sociology had a saving philosophical virtue: political ideas might infuse sociological notions, but they did so in mediated fashion. Sociologists could, and did, argue about their assumptions, but they also argued about the social world. Ultimately, what diminished the appeal of the doctrines of consensus and function is the historical evidence that consensus no longer exists, that institutions no longer work.

The state socialist regimes have allowed, by and large, no such public corrections of social thought. A flourishing pre-Bolshevik Russian sociological tradition was eradicated, and as Stalinism replaced the frequently adventurous Marxism of the early revolutionary years, a dogmatized and impoverished "Marxism-Leninism" was all that could be heard in the Soviet Union. The promulgation of "laws" of social development of an entirely invented kind had one clear aim: the point was not to understand the world or to change it, but to justify it. The implantation of Stalinism in Eastern Europe by the Red Army had

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the same effect in countries like Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. Only in Yugoslavia did a sociology autonomous of state and party control emerge. Marxist and critical, theoretic in substance but empirical in focus, Yugoslav sociology had to defend itself against inane denigration in the East and incomprehension in the West.

In the last decade, the decomposition of Stalinism and the growth of productive capacity in the state socialist regimes have altered the situation. In Poland and Czechoslovakia a suppressed sociological tradition often Social Democratic in inspiration was reborn. In Hungary, while the aging Lukács labors away at his treatises, his younger disciples do empirical sociology. The crosscurrents of Communist politics at times silence a sociology which has refused to become a sloganized exegesis of party programs, but the intellectual territory liberated by the sociologists has not all been lost. Paradoxically though, the resilience and honesty of sociology in Eastern Europe owes much to the Communist technocrats' need for reliable information as a mode of extending and consolidating their rule. The increasing complexity of administration, distribution and political manipulation in societies now entering the advanced stages of industrialization, and the need for reliable data on consumer preference, educational and occupational discipline and political opinion, leave the technocrats little choice but to encourage certain kinds of sociology. Once merely housed in Moscow in the Institute of Philosophy of the Academy of Sciences (an Institute not so long ago notorious among the learned in the Soviet Union as an assemblage of ideological hacks), sociology now has found other quarters. Moscow now also has an Institute of Concrete Social Research. In Akadamsgorod, near Novosibirsk, computerized and mathematical models of behavior are advanced with an ardor we saw in this country two decades ago. The technocratic cultivation of sociology, however, is a constant internal threat to the Soviet Union's intellectual controllers: suppose the sociolgists do not confine themselves to the execution of technocratic directives for data collection but begin, instead, to think critically about society? This is what happened in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland. Indeed, the Varna Congress was a gigantic mechanism of defense against this possibility.

The first line of defense was left to the Bulgarians. The organization, if it can be dignified by that word, of the Congress did not seem to come from Moscow (many Soviet colleagues were revulsed by the local arrangements). The Bulgarians, among the most retrograde of regimes in Eastern Europe, probably acted instinctively. The impression of openness had to be given, but the effects of genuine oppenness had to be minimized, since they could not be entirely eliminated. Masterful only in their disorganization, lack of coherence and inability to deal

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with simple matters, our Bulgarian hosts may indeed have acted largely in good faith. The result was as good as purposeful sabotage.

Even a great satirist could barely do justice to the scene. The participants from Eastern Europe were lodged mostly in hotels ten kilometers distant from the resort town of Gold Strand, where the rest of us were housed. There was no list of participants with their local addresses, although there was under the counter of a Balkantourist desk a preliminary list of bookings arranged by hotels — an inaccurate one. Only one hotel had telephones in its rooms, and in any event receptionists and clerks at the other hotels were usually unable to find the names of their guests on their registers. A bus service did shuttle back and forth between Gold Strand and the Congress meeting sites at the Palace of Culture and Sport and the University in Varna. The Eastern Europeans, however, had buses only at the beginning of sessions and mealtimes. It was not easy for them to get to Gold Strand for those extracurricular talks which frequently constitute the life of a scholarly conference.

The participants had been instructed, in the strictest terms, to ship their papers in advance to the Bulgarian organizing committee. Many who did never saw their papers again. Some never arrived, others were given out at random, so that none were left for the sessions for which they were intended, and still others were strewn in such disorder that hours of their authors' searching were required to extricate them from the pile. Four out of every five summaries in the printed volume of abstracts were by authors from Eastern Europe. The daily Congress Bulletin, issued in Bulgarian, French and English, invariably stressed the contributions from Eastern Europe. The Bulletin outdid itself, however, on the second day. There was no space, its anonymous editors explained, for conveying changes of room, modifications of programs and other notices — these were too numerous. We were favored, instead, with the full text of the address of greeting delivered the day before by His Excellency, the Prime Minister of the Bulgarian People's Republic.

To these difficulties of communication were added others. The Italians who constituted the secretariat of the International Sociological Association negotiated for several days during the Congress to obtain a bulletin board in the Palace of Culture. Their request had been agreed to by the Bulgarian organizers, but the Palace personnel simply removed it. The gallery was stacked during the opening address by the Prime Minister with persons who wore Party membership buttons, but local students and the local populace could not attend the discussions: entrance to the buildings was by congress badge only. Meanwhile, room allocations were constantly shifted about, two groups were sometimes

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assigned to one room and at one point Adbul Malik, the distinguished Egyptian sociologist currently in exile in Paris, had to convene his group on the floor of a corridor. Large groups were given small rooms and small groups found themselves in large ones.

There were other episodes. The Prime Minister had invited some 300 of the participants (chosen from among session chairmen, rapporteurs, and so on) to a closed reception, but the Organizing Committee had printed the time and place of the event on the program. Bulgarian police and plainclothesmen took the invitations at the foot of a hotel staircase (some were promptly handed over the bannister behind their backs to uninvited sociologists) and pushed back hundreds of others. A British university lecturer was thrown down the staircase and a German teaching assistant who remonstrated with the police was rather thoroughly roughed up. No apologies were tendered, but the Bulgarian sociologists did plead with their foreign colleagues to treat the incident as a "provocation." By this time, however, the irritation and disgust of many of the participants with the course of the Congress were quite audible, and even the least perceptive of our hosts began to wish us gone. The International Hotel, where the reception was held, returned to its daily routine before the sociologists had left. An earlier set of guests had been thrown out of their rooms and transferred to other hotels upon our arrival (scheduled, after all, only two years in advance). Now a curious mixture of German tourists and stocky native big shots filled its lobby. The latter were well protected: the detectives I'd first seen around the Prime Minister were very visible. Their comportment was such as to suggest that the "defense of socialism" was consonant with Turkish manners: they made themselves conspicuous by shoving aside women at the elevators. The Bulgarian elite enjoyed ostentatious privileges and showed hopelessly provincial and petit–bourgeois taste. The big shots drove about with motorcycle police escorts who compelled all traffic on broad and empty roads to stop while they passed. Their limousines had white chintz curtains. Pathetic Bulgaria? Like many nations once ruled by the Turks, its people seemed broken in culture and spirit. And to Orientalism was added Stalinism.

Was there any scholarly value at all to the conference? A considerable number of sociologists had doubted it ahead of time, and stayed away. Aron, Bell, Bendix, Bottomore, Casanova, Dahrendorf, Etzioni, Gellner, Gouldner, Lefebvre, Habermas, Pizzorno, Supek and Worsley were among the absentees. Adam Schaff, apparently swept aside by the recent Polish campaign against "revisionists" (and Jews), was missing. His Warsaw colleague Zygmunt Bauman had chosen the road of exile — or return — to Tel Aviv and did not travel to Bulgaria.

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The absences were very regrettable. Some of the missing scholars are neo-Marxists, and their encounter with a dogmatic orthodoxy would have been educational for the younger sociologists from the state socialist regimes, who were present in great numbers. Some are decidedly ex-Marxists, and the sharpness of their positions would have enlivened the Congress. Instead, discussion was befogged, and I had the impression of swimming in a gelatinous substance. Talk was cheap but genuine controversy was rare.

In no country are sociologists conspicuous for their reluctance to speak, and the relative absence of conflict at Varna remains to be explained. Harangues there were aplenty. A pseudo-Marxist aggressiveness marked the contributions of many of the participants from Eastern and Central Europe, who seemed quite unable to distinquish between intellectual polemic and a level of discourse which would have stupified Agitprop cadres at a party school. We also had to bear with those who, in the middle of discussions, read from totally irrelevant prepared texts. Chairmen who had prepared their sessions for months in advance were at the last minute asked to accommodate just another few more Soviet or Bulgarian papers.

What I have called pseudo-Marxism is less an ideology than it is a catechism or an incantation. It is also a sociological phenomenon. The groups from the state socialist regimes were quite profoundly divided, and that division was in itself a mitigating element at the Congress. There were, to begin with, differences of intelligence: not even all the varieties of Stalinism and Brezhnevism have been able to alter genetic variations. I had the impression that the more dogmatic representatives from the eastern societies were actually the less gifted ones. Factors of social inheritance also played their part. Many of the Bulgarians, the Communist Germans and some of the older Russian recruits to "intellectual" activity from Party organizations were quite obviously not from academic or professional families, not offspring of the intelligentsia, but sons and daughters of manual workers. Upward social mobility, in state socialist regimes as well as our own, extracts its own cultural price: the crudity and historical shortsightedness of the pseudo-Marxists expressed a lack of education, an inability to work with the complexities of a tradition — even their own. I recall a moment when Alain Touraine reminded a session that not all revolutions were made by Leninist-type parties: the French had not been. Cultural and intellectual isolation must also have played their part in engendering vulgarity: the Poles, the Czechs and some of the Russians have traveled widely, as have the Rumanians. The Communist Germans rarely get to the Sorbonne or Berkeley, and most of them have not been to Frankfurt, Goettinger or

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West Berlin. Their more sophisticated spokesmen (Hahn, Steiner, Braunreuter and others) were interesting. The others should have been told by a regime jealous of its international standing to shut up.

Intellectually, pseudo-Marxism consists of a few elementary propositions, repeated compulsively, and mostly false. The theme of the Congress was "Contemporary and Future Societies, Prediction and Social Planning." The pseudo-Marxists insisted on a rigid distinction between state socialist and other societies. The "laws" of development applicable to the one type could not be applied to the others. None speculated that there are not any "laws" of social development, but simply successions of historical structures with different degrees of responsiveness to concious historical will. This was surprising, since their conception of "law" in their own societies presents their respective Communist parties as the sole legitimate and effective incarnations of human historical will. To this was linked the assertion that the working class (exceedingly vaguely defined) in fact exercised power and held productive property in these societies. I did ask a Communist German how we could understand this last claim: were there not, as mediating factors, state, party, the division of labor, authority structure in the work process and differential allocation of the social product? The answer was brief: the question was a "theoretical and not an empirical one." As I heard it, I could not help but think of the German phrase, *auf die Gesinnung kommt es an,* it all depends on your point of view.

The "laws" of development for the state socialist regimes determined the interpretation of their empirical research. Since these societies were "victoriously" developing their productive and moral capacities, they had no conflicts. Occasional problems in development meant only insufficient assimilation of the official social morality. Critical studies of bureaucracy were few, although the Vice-Rector of the Komsomol Academy in Moscow did report on a study of popular attitudes to local bureaucracy which suggested something other than complete satisfaction. The pseudo-Marxists used empirical research to "verify" laws which were nothing but projections of their own dogmatic minds. There was no Marxist analysis of production relations, of superstructure, in their own regimes. Contradiction central to Marxist theory as a category for apprehending history did not exist for them.

In these circumstances, the pseudo-Marxist contribution to administrative technology in their own countries was nil. States and societies cannot be governed by recourse to a few elementary dicta, particularly when the dicta are false. This difficulty did contribute an opportunity for the more serious sociologists in these countries. I would divide them

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into two groups, although it was sometimes difficult to tell them apart. We did meet no small number of colleagues who were overtly or covertly critical of, even opposed to, the exercise of power in state socialism. One distinguished younger Soviet colleague told me, "Marx died a long while ago; much has happened since then, not least in what some refer to as 'bourgeois' thought." From another country, a participant explained his silence: "Under present political conditions at home, I cannot speak my mind, and I will not say things I do not believe." Criticism, for those sociologists, consists in describing social reality. They cannot, in general, deal with it as a political totality — but they can and often do say enough to illuminate the whole by dealing with its parts. The Poles and the Czechs were, as we might have expected, masters of the art: there is evidence that they are being joined by an increasing number of sociologists from the Soviet Union.

What kind of studies do come from those with a minimally critical attitude? I heard, or read, accounts of social mobility in the socialist societies which left no doubt as to the existence there of a stratified system of social relations — a class system based on state property. There was an intelligent Polish contribution on workers' participation in economic planning as a goal of Polish socialism which left no doubt that the goal was very remote of attainment. An inquiry on religion in the Soviet Union pointed to its decline, but also left open the question of the universality of religious aspiration. Studies of this sort were distinguished from the pseudo-Marxist harangues not only by their attention to nuance and detail, but by a superior intellectual level, a realization of the difficult relationship between theory and fact, a refusal to assimilate reflection to political exhortation. There are, of course, limits beyond which they cannot as yet go.

But as they succeed in developing more valid methods of sociological inquiry will they not contribute to the consolidation of the state socialist technocracy by making it more efficient? The answer, unfortunately, is yes. Of the two groupings of sociologists in Eastern Europe who inhabit our world of discourse, the second is not so much critical as pragmatic. Some, to borrow a term from von Hayek not heard much recently, are "scientistic." The enormous development of the culture of mathematics and the physical sciences in the Soviet Union has induced some sociologists there (the parallels with our own recent academic experience are striking) to experiment with mathematical and formal descriptions of social process. There's a new Soviet version of Lenin's famous dictum, that socialism equals the Soviets plus electrification — socialism equals the Soviet state equipped with computers. In a regime

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which has not begun to solve enormous problems of bureaucratic ossification, the reduction of some of those problems to terms soluble by computers is obviously a political priority. The Communist Germans, too, have made much of computerization: the aged Ulbricht himself, some years ago, took a three-day crash course in programming. They cannot yet, however, begin to relinquish the notion of controlling all social processes from the center. The Soviet interest in computerization of social research seems to reflect a political decision — however contested and uncertain — to allow some areas of society a relative autonomy. It is of a piece with economic decentralization and the conscious development of a socialist market. The appearance for the first time at a World Congress of Sociology of Soviet sociologists of this type went largely unremarked. It is a phenomenon which may in the end be more significant than the crudities inflicted upon us by some of their colleagues. The establishment of a framework for the study of these processes presupposes a prior intellectual decision that they are relatively independent. The license to study them implies a political decision to use manipulative rather than coercive means of control. In fact, those regimes with an intelligentsia closer to contemporary Western culture are precisely those which have been persuaded to move toward the cultivation of empirical sociology — and for technocratic reasons.

What about the Western sociologists? Many of our stars were there, and they were accompanied by a good many intellectual footmen. The diversity of topics covered by the western papers was immense: family, community, social psychiatry, work and organization, politics, methodology and much more. Indeed, there was no single Western sociology represented at the Congress, as a fragmented social world has been reflected in a fragmented social science. The papers were full of conflicting assumptions about social nature, its malleability and manipulability — all to the good, for pluralism is a good thing, no doubt. But there was very little debate about the nature of our society, which cast some doubt on our intellectual seriousness. In some sense, we were the exaggerated antitheses to the absurd simplifications of our state socialist brethren. There a terrifying uniformity, here an intolerable confusion. Perhaps, however, the confusion is willed: a certain kind of categorical pluralism allows every man his own sociology. In the final analysis, this is a caricature of a free market — though the market society has long since disappeared, replaced by its technocratic and bureaucratic successors. But, despite the confusion, Western sociology has redeeming elements. Bureaucracy and technocracy themselves have become the objects of inquiry for those who seek to bring up to date the sociological

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tradition that investigated early industrial society. Inquiry of this sort, of course, inevitably becomes political: the pluralism of sociology cannot justify a flight from politics.

During the Congress, political voices were not entirely silent. Some, like myself and a few allies, attempted to engage the pseudo-Marxists and above all the authentic Marxists from the state socialist regimes in some kind of dialogue. Publicly, this proved almost impossible. Privately, over Slivovitz, we made out better. At the very least, we managed to trade our books and articles for caviar and vodka: the Soviet as well as the general Communist demand for printed matter was very great. A note of political pathos was added by the group of younger sociologists who managed to hold a few meetings — on the sociology of sociology. Was international sociology at the service of the internatinal power elite, they asked? The answer is that, in general, it has very little to offer to that elite. Nevertheless, the younger Dutch, Germans and Americans who organized the meeting struck a responsive chord. Hundreds of colleagues rushed to inscribe themselves on their mailing list. I asked about their coordinating committee and learned that of its five initial members, one was a young Bulgarian and one a student from Niger attached to a Bulgarian university. This was certainly one of the first international new left groups to have not one but two representatives from Bulgaria on it: the "helpfulness" of the Bulgarian was in the circumstances a bit surprising.

I would have wished for much more criticism of technocracy — in the neocapitalist and state socialist regimes — on the Congress program, but it was good to see the critical sociologists break through. Their level of rationality contrasted favorably with that of the radical caucus at the September annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, at which professors were denounced for writing radical books, for "not doing anything," and one leaflet declared that radical sociologists were henceforth to be considered the main enemies of radicalism. Reminders of the inanities of the American scene were not, however, entirely missing. One younger American described Manson as an exemplar of a new communal way of living, and the "fat people's liberation movement" and the "gay people's liberation movement" as part of the avant-garde in America. The chairman of the session did interrupt to ask that the terms be explained: he lived in Paris and knew what they meant, but he doubted that they were current in Bulgaria.

My last image of the Congress was at the airport in Sofia. Sixty of the French had been bumped off an overbooked flight to western Europe and had been told that they would have to spend the night in

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Sofia while alternate routings were found. They made a terrible fuss, and in the end Bulgarian Airlines whistled up a special jet to fly them directly to Paris that night. I congratulated them on their success: it was no doubt the first demonstration in Sofia in decades, and probably the last for a long time.

Our own plane was a Lufthansa Boeing, with drinks and newspapers available before we had crossed the border: an airborne fragment of our own reality, but a perfectly representative one, crowded, hurried, efficient in small things and tinny. Perhaps, I thought, society has begun to resist even analysis and reflection, to say nothing of mastery. The early sociologists were political philosophers and philosophers of history. They looked to society for the fulfillment of human nature, for the possibility of a better life. Our own generation has renounced these aims; we regard empirical sociology as a gloss on a reality we do not believe we can change. Max Weber, asked early in this century why he studied society, said that he did it to see how much he could stand. (*"Wieval ich aushalten kann."*) We lack even this ironic acknowledgement of individual moral purpose, and our search for a new public good has been halting and ineffective when we have indulged it. The word *indulged* is frightening, but I shall let it stay. What was once the strongest force behind intellectual activity is now a mere psychological oddity, a matter of personal whim, a moral idiosyncracy. The most desperate and the least satisfactory aspect of our Congress was, however, perhaps the most valuable one, insofar as we tried to go beyond the picture of things as they are to find a moral and political vocabulary to describe an irrational and oppressive world. But this did not get very far. For the self-designated party of revolution in the state socialist societies has become a party of the institutionalized revolution, an apologist for old tyrannies in new form, whose most intelligent and rational subjects are agonizingly aware of their servitude. For our part, we do not embrace our injustices, but we do not seem to be transcending them. Our own younger revolutionaries think that they can start from scratch, and so fall easy victim to its old traps. A happier solution may await us in the future, but international conferences appear to be the last place to work toward one.

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# ARGUMENTS

## THE POLITICS OF TERROR

Much has been made recently of the growing appetite for political histrionics in some sections of the New Left. The line separating the counterculture from the counterpolitics, it has been observed, is becoming more and more blurred. To use a phrase of Richard Gilman's, there has been a confusion of realms in which the traditionally separate worlds of art and politics have been merged, to the detriment of both (the Yippies' circus at the Chicago trial was perhaps the clearest example). Yet what's been called "revolution for the hell of it" and "Dada Politics [of] comic relief" has in fact had some limited success. With the unwitting complicity of our Julius Hoffmans, it has revealed the latent charade of much of our "normal" judicial and political practice, and it has prompted a healthy and long overdue skepticism about the bombast and pretense of traditional American politics. Still, it's been argued, one of the primary dangers of Yippie strategy is the ease with which all politics, including the radical variety, can be confused with its parody. The Yippie politics of the put-on risks trapping itself in its own world.

Almost as if in reaction, another segment of the radical movement has taken a drastic step in a different direction. Shin'ya Ono, a Weatherman writing in *Leviathan* in December, 1969, sounded the new note: "The time is past when tens of thousands of 'movement' or left–liberal people can 'dig' revolution, Che, Malcolm, Cleaver, put revolutionary posters on their walls and listen to revolutionary songs, 'enjoy' the *Battle of Algiers* and consider themselves to be 'hip' and on the right side of the revolutionary struggle — while living bourgeois, chauvinist, racist, white-skin privileged lives. . . ." And so, in March of '70 while people were complaining about the left's rhetorical overkill, headlines were made by a rash of bombings in New York and elsewhere, as rhetoric about bringing the war home became real.

The advent of deliberate terrorism, still infrequent, is due in part to the exhaustion of symbolic action itself. It is indeed extraordinary how swiftly yesterday's verbal outrages become today's bromides. The

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terrorists have not simply gone beyond theater as ersatz politics. What they have done is to fall into a kind of politics which can itself be called theatricalized, or more precisely, *aestheticized.* A new confusion has thus been substituted for the old.

The notion of the "aestheticization of politics" was first developed by Walter Benjamin in the epilogue of his essay on "The Work of Art in the Epoch of Mechanical Reproduction." Benjamin had something specific in mind: the aesthetic glorification of war which Marinetti and the Futurists had contributed to fascism. Quoting extensively from the Futurist manifesto on the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, Benjamin showed how technological advance, paradoxically, diminishes man's sense of his own power, resulting in a politics of will: "War is beautiful," Marinetti wrote, "because it establishes man's dominion over the subjugated machinery." And if fascism aetheticized politics, Benjamin argued, communism must politicize art.

Benjamin's solution, judging at least from the sterility of socialist realism, may not have been very fruitful, but his diagnosis was still acute. And yet, the aestheticization of politics is not to be confined to radicalism of the right. As a political style, it has a wider scope and can serve almost any master. The point which the German antidemocratic legal theorist Carl Schmitt made a generation ago in his *Politische Romantik* can be repeated today. There really are no specific objectives in romantic (or aesthetic) politics, Schmitt pointed out, only a dissatisfaction expressed in a style. Politics can be *romanticized,* but, as the differences among such romantics as Lamartine, Wordsworth and Adam Müller demonstrate, there is no strictly romantic political program. Terrorism can be substituted for war in Marinetti's manifesto, even though one is conventionally considered a tactic of the right, the other of the left. The point is not that all those who advocate violence are fascists — for only the most naïve can question the justification of violence on certain occasions — but that a certain attitude toward violence transcends traditional categories.

The relationship between art and terror has always been a close one. From Dostoyevsky to Godard, artists have been drawn to the terrorist, whether through fascination or revulsion. Genet, for reasons aesthetic and otherwise, has expressed his attraction to such practitioners of political violence as the S.S. More recently, he has been touring with the most rhetorically violent of the New Left groups in this country, the Black Panthers. In the eighteen nineties, that most terroristic of modern decades, the remarks and actions of a number of Symbolist poets in France expressed one of the reasons for the fascination. In 1893, Laurent Tailhade, one of their lesser lights, greeted the news of an anarchist's

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bomb hurled into the Chamber of Deputies with the words, *"Qu'importe les victimes, si le geste est beau?"* (History, it should be added, does not record how beautiful he thought the gesture when a similar device exploded in a restaurant where he was dining several months later, blinding him in one eye. Terrorism, as recent events grimly affirm, has a way of rebounding on its perpetrators.)

Tailhade's casual celebration of the beauties of bomb-throwing seems scarcely consonant with the deadly earnestness of its current advocates. And yet, there is a subtle similarity between his position and theirs. In this respect, the humorless Weathermen are not as diametrically opposed to the Yippies as they believe themselves to be. The aestheticization of politics is not a matter simply of glorifying violence, whether socially sanctioned, as in the case of war, or individually inspired, as with terrorism. As Benjamin also noted, it expresses the consummation of art for art's sake as *Fiat ars — pereat mundus*. In other words, it exaggerates the latent antihumanist, nonethical aspect of art which Kant referred to as "purposiveness without purpose." The position it assumes is self-consciously amoral, at least in terms of the prevailing morality. A radical politics, to be sure, must always question a society's moral system since that morality frequently serves in the interests of the status quo. It must do so, however, with firm moral alternatives in mind, especially because of the need to weigh conflicting ethical claims. An aestheticized politics, on the other hand, ceases to ask serious moral and practical questions, especially questions involving means and ends. Instead of seeking a transvaluation of values, it degenerates into its own justification as a kind of *politique pour la politique*. In so doing, it corresponds to that view of politics which Nietzsche approved in *The Genealogy of Morals*. Speaking of the first politicians, those "most spontaneous, most unconscious artists that exist," he wrote: "being natural organizers, these men know nothing of guilt, responsibility, consideration. They are actuated by the terrible egotism of the artist. . . ." This might describe the young people who died on Eleventh Street (though one might question their organizational ability).

Even when it pays lip service to ethical goals, the primary function of this type of politics seems to be the self-definition of the participant through action. Politics is thus reduced to an exercise in personal realization with little regard for its other consequences, to what is sometimes called "political existentialism." The Weatherman writing in *Leviathan* spoke of his experience in Chicago during the "days of rage" in these terms: "The two months of my struggle, such as it was, in and out of the collective has given a revolutionary significance to an old Asian saying: 'By denying oneself, one realizes oneself.'" Frequently, the mo-

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tivation of the new terrorists appears more psychological than political: as in the assertion of revolutionary *machismo* on the part of guilt-ridden whites who need to prove to the Blacks and Vietnamese that they too have risked, struggled and suffered. Martyrdom is a possibility they seem willing, even eager, to court. "The revolution's victory," the Weatherman quoted above wrote, "is certain, but the overwhelming majority of the cadres in this room, unless we punk out, will not live that long." In short, the goal seem less to make revolution than to make revolutionaries.

For these reasons, the new terrorism can be understood as almost as much an aestheticization of politics as the old. As a result, it is a departure not only from mundane political practice, but from anything which can legitimately be called revolutionary *praxis* as well. This is especially ironic because in a sense the actions of the terrorists are an outgrowth of what might be called the idolatry of *praxis*. *Praxis* found its way into the vocabulary of the left after a long career beginning in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (and excellently traced in Nicholas Lobkowicz's *Theory and Practice: History of a Concept from Aristotle to Marx*). Loosely defined, it has come to signify a kind of self-creating action different in its origin and function from externally motivated behavior. *Praxis* also means man's conscious shaping of the historical world which he recognizes as the product of his labors. As an activity, it therefore differs from the alienated creation of a world of reified objects and institutions whose human origins have been forgotten.

Significantly, in the sixties *praxis* replaced alienation as the catchphrase in Marx's writing which the left found most immediately relevant. In place of *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts,* whose exploration of alienation had made them especially popular in the quietistic fifties, Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach* was elevated to the position of central text. It is of course in his eleventh thesis that Marx made his famous plea to change rather than merely interpret the world. The New Left's turn to the centrality of *praxis* in Marx's thought was extremely valuable. First, it served to overcome the academic isolation of radical theory as something totally discontinuous from contemporary political reality. In the fifties at the height of the Cold War, the possibility that a critically oriented theoretical analysis of society might have any implications for action was dismissed by all but a sanguine few. Almost all fifties radicals were "parlor pinks." Second, the rediscovery of *praxis* reaffirmed the importance of the revolutionary experience, of self-renewal along with social change, and of the partial autonomy of the individual in the face of objective social forces. Here it served to connect radical politics and the counterculture with its cult of experience. In the middle sixties, the New Left thrived on the élan which always accompanies the realization that the world can indeed be changed.

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In the halcyon days of the movement, however, the necessity of *praxis* always included respect for its theoretical dimension. In 1967, Marcuse was able to write, "today a turn toward theory can be observed among the opposition, which is especially important in that the New Left . . . began with a total suspicion of ideology." Most influential in this regard was, of course, the war in Vietnam, which led to a general reassessment of the conventional wisdom of the Cold War years about the dangers of speculative thought. What in the fifties had been too swiftly dismissed as ideological mystification enjoyed a renaissance as critical social theory. In some cases, of course, this meant little more than a dusting off of the stale clichés of an even earlier period (one is reminded of William Phillips's remark that he couldn't respond to some new leftists because their arguments were so old he had forgotten the answers). But for others — Marcuse, Carl Oglesby, Tom Hayden on occasions, non-Americans like Ernest Mandel, Serge Mallet and Tom Nairn, to mention a few — it led to a sensitive application of theoretic insights to contemporary realities. And what was equally important, it resulted in an increasing awareness of the interrelationship between thought and action. "The unity of theory and *praxis*" became one of the central phrases in the vocabulary of the New Left.

With the new terrorism, however, all this has changed. In an article appearing in the *Harvard Crimson* in late '69, an undergraduate named Richard Hyland attempted a defense of terrorism. He began by paying the required lip service to the necessity of theory: "The point is that modern philosophy, maybe since Marx, has taught us the necessary correlation between theory and practice. You don't really believe something unless you are acting for it." But in the course of the essay, Hyland demonstrated how far he had departed from "modern philosophy, maybe since Marx." "Arguments based on reason," he wrote, "and the valid laws of discourse can prove anything within their system. It is the feeling I have in my stomach against the war that matters. Any argument in favor of it does not. . . . Rationality binds the mind and restricts the soul. It might even destroy the brain cells. We need to be liberated. We should be constrained no longer by possible rational consequences." Politics is thus aestheticized, separating feelings from rational considerations.

Of course, some of the terrorists claim to be operating according to a theoretical critique of current conditions. But their estimate of the contemporary scene is not convincing. For the most part, the terrorists seem to follow the Weatherman line with its scornful dismissal of the American working class as irretrivably co-opted by the fruits of imperialism. In so doing, it should be added, they distinguish themselves from the Russian prototypes with whom they are so often compared.

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The Narodniki used terror in order to awaken the consciousness of the Russian masses. Our terrorists, on the other hand, seem to have accepted Marcuse's notion of one-dimensionality in American society as an irreversible reality. Having written off the working class, they base their hopes on the consummation of a global class struggle. According to their vulgarized Leninist theory of imperialism, the essential task of the "metropolitan " revolutionary is to act as a fifth columnist, disrupting capitalism from within. Because chaos rather than a change in consciousness is the goal, problems with the relationship between means and ends practically disappear. Blowing up buildings or making a cult hero of Charles Manson are permissable, even though they serve to discredit the movement in the eyes of those who, at least at one time, were to be its benefactors. But this doesn't really matter, the argument goes, because the advanced industrial nations of the West are doomed in the long run. So, what Marxists once saw as an international working class transcending national boundaries has been replaced by a simplisitic equation of nations with classes, uncomfortably similar to the old fascist notion of "young" and "old" nations.

The result, of course, is that by accepting so lofty a responsibility, the terrorists have justified their indifference to the development of a strategy for change before the apocalypse. And ironically, they have also ceased to engage in the revolutionary *praxis* which they so fervently espouse. As far back as Aristotle, the concept of *praxis* contained an inherent ambiguity, referring both to the process of politics and to its results. *Praxis* meant both "doing" and "making." Although the dual character of the term was retained by Marx, he was careful to stress its second sense. To Marx, the associations workers formed meant that they created new institutions and relationships opposed to those forced on them by capitalist society. These were to be adumbrations of the post–capitalist society he so fervently desired. To Marx, man was first and foremost a laborer, a creator of objects and institutions in the world which expressed his true self. Under capitalism, however, the fruits of his objectification were alien to him, no longer recognized as the product of his creation. Instead, they were perceived as a reified other. This was especially true of social relations which were mistakenly assumed to be eternal because man had forgotten his role in their genesis. The function of revolutionary *praxis* was precisely the reversal of this condition. The political action of the revolutionary was designed both to destroy the old world of alien objects or commodities and social relations and to create a new one in which man could recognize himself. What the new terrorists seem to have forgotten is the necessity of creating a universe of nonalienated objectifications amid the old one of commodities and reified social relations. They have reduced *praxis* to "doing" rather than "making," stressing only its destructive side.

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Having pointed to the severe deficiencies in the political vision of the new terrorists (not to mention the more obvious ones sufficiently spelled out elsewhere), one ought not to ignore the ironies implicit in their actions. For all their anti-American pretensions, they have not really succeeded to the degree they believe in liberating themselves from our society's thrall. For example, one of the justifications they offer for the destruction of buildings — Hyland's piece in the *Crimson* makes much of this point — is that it will serve to undermine the sacred spell of property over our lives. In a society of comparative scarcity in which capital accumulation was a vital necessity, this might have some validity. But in contemporary America, where consumption and programmed waste keep the economy going, the periodic destruction of property is already a commonplace. (Destruction and consumption are of course not precisely the same, but both are opposed to the obsessive accumulation of an earlier capitalist era.) The traditional bourgeois inviolability of property, although certainly still existant in some sections of the population, has been robbed of much of its power. If we suffer from a fetishism of commodities, to use Marx's term, it is no longer that of the hoarder, but rather that of the compulsive consumer. As one of the graffiti in Harvard Square pointed out after the riot of last April, the major beneficiaries of "trashing" the local businesses were the glass companies.

Ironically, the terrorists' rejection of theory has a startling resemblance to the "end of ideology" proclaimed by the fifties liberals they so despise. It would be quite a feat to unearth a common bond between Sidney Hook and the militants he so often excoriates, but when Hook wrote on Marxism in *From Hegel to Marx,* he devoted some thirty pages to the *Theses on Feuerbach* and only a few paragraphs to the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts.* Although written in 1936, well before Hook became one of the classical fifties liberals, his general treatment of Marxism *cum* Pragmatism anticipated the direction of his later thought. His attempt to make Marx into a kind of proto-Dewey and the terrorists' denigration of theory have something in common. Both are excessively concerned with means and tend to reflect less on the ends they are supposed to serve.

What is more disturbing about the new terrorism is that it signals a return to the antitheoretical bias of American political life. Marcuse's statement of 1967 about the heartening growth of speculative, critical, theory on the left seems sadly outdated just three years later. To base one's hopes for serious social change, as some revolutionaries seem to, on a global revolution in which the advanced industrial societies of the West will be overwhelmed by the Third World, is to exchange the insights of Marx for the vacuities of Spengler. Moreover, to believe that

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a revolution which is really worth making can be achieved without extensive popular support is to ignore the lessons of previous betrayed revolutions. It is to become indifferent not only to theory, but to history as well.

And yet, after all these criticisms have been made, the realities to which the new terrorism has been a response must not be ignored. No political movement should be understood as simply an outgrowth of psychological needs or deluded thinking. In moments of bitterness, it sometimes seems as if America has spawned the radicalism it deserves. It is easy enough to castigate the terrorists for forgetting the creative side of legitimate *praxis*. What is more difficult is to recognize how rapidly attempts to construct alternative life-styles within the current society are swallowed up, how the "liberated zones" of the counterculture have been almost immediately "reenslaved" by the mass media. And to remember that their rejection of the American working class as a force for social change did come after several years of largely futile community organizing. It is also easy to express horror at the irresponsible violence of the terrorists without at the same time seeing it in the context of America's increasing "legitimate" use of violent means at home and abroad. So too is it simple to register indignation at what we have called the terrorists' aestheticization of politics, while ignoring its analogue on a larger scale.

Perhaps most disturbing is that the radical resort to terror reflects a more pervasive crisis in our society. The swift growth of the "action–factions" of the left can partly be understood as a response to the failure of "reasonableness" as a political force. The dizzying escalation of a good deal of rhetoric on the New Left was less the cause than the consequence of this condition. Paradoxically, the diminution of the power of thought to influence action has accompanied the widening liberalization of expression in our society. It has often been observed that the censorship exercised by totalitarian governments pays a perverted tribute to the influence of the written word. The continuum between thought and action is taken seriously by governments which attempt to control both. In the liberal democracies of the West, all kinds of thought have been tolerated, although often potentially subversive actions have not. Here the continuum between the two has never been really acknowledged, "the unity of theory and practice" is perpetually frustrated. In fact, it might be argued that the freedom permitted to verbal expression serves somehow to divert attention from the ways in which the freedom to act in the world is restricted. This is demonstrated very clearly in one of the arguments often adduced to justify the liberalization of obscenity laws: that no girl was ever seduced by a book. This may be empirically

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unverifiable, but the fact that it is assumed to be true suggests a decline in the power of words. It is this reality which gives some credence to Marcuse's famous argument about "repressive tolerance" (although it does not necessarily say anything in favor of the selective intolerance he proposes as a remedy).

What the terrorists have grasped in their desperation is that serious social change is not likely to come about by persuasive reasoning or peaceful demonstrations alone. In this respect, they seem to agree with the arguments about the fallacies of revolution as theater. The tragedy, of course, is that their solution is itself not the break with the past they imagine, not the future they hope for. It is still not the revolutionary *praxis* grounded in a sustained theoretical critique of existing possibilities, long-term objectives and commensurate means whose necessity the New Left seemed to acknowledge only a few years ago. Perhaps the conditions for the unity of theory and practice are not at hand; certainly the will to achieve it has flagged.

In other words, it is difficult not to be pessimistic about the future contours of the New Left if it does not distinguish itself clearly from terrorist factions. In the past, terrorism has always been on the fringe of radical movements, at least those with any hope for success. After the murder of Shatov in Dostoyevsky's *The Possessed,* one of the conspirators named Liputin feverishly asks Peter Verkhovensky, the leader of their cell:

> "One thing; only tell me the truth. Is there only one group of five in the world, or is it true that there are several hundred of them?"

After some hesitations and temporizing, Peter answers:

> "You're a fool, Liputin. What difference could it make to you now whether there's only one or a thousand?"

To which Liputin triumphantly replies:

> "Which means that there is only one. I knew it! I knew it all the time that there was only one. I knew it all along!"

Today, it is unlikely that our Peters would have to hesitate and our Liputins feel so isolated.

**Martin Jay**

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# CONTEMPORARY NONSENSE

WASHINGTON (AP) — Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird formally dedicated a small room in the Pentagon today as a quiet place for meditation and prayer.

"In a sense, this ceremony marks the completion of the Pentagon, for until now this building lacked a place where man's inner spirit could find quiet expression," Mr. Laird said.

The meditation room, he said, "is an affirmation that, though we cling to the principle that church and state should be separate, we do not propose to separate man from God."

(*The New York Times,* December 16, 1970.) Contributed by M. A. Novelli, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

## QUOTATION OF THE DAY

"The President is aware of what is going on. That's not to say there is something going on."—Ronald L. Ziegler, White House Press Secretary, discussing situation in southeast Asia.

(*The New York Times,* February 1, 1971.) Contributed by Richard Fitzgerald, New York, New York.

## ATOMIC SITE UNFIT FOR USE BY PUBLIC

### BUT A.E.C. DENIES TESTING HARMS ENVIRONMENT

WASHINGTON (UPI) — The Atomic Energy Commission has reported that 19 years of nuclear explosions above and below ground have made parts of its Nevada test site unfit for public use in the foreseeable future.

"The effect upon the terrestrial ecology from past underground nuclear tests has been minimal. However, the residue of many years of testing has made portions of the N.T.S. unfit for uncontrolled human use."

(*The New York Times,* November 29, 1970.) Contributed by William Mather Boardman, New York, New York.

## PILOTS OFFER AID TO TWA

NEW YORK (AP) — In a show of concern for their employer's financial plight, Trans World Airline pilots have volunteered to take a number of steps — including $25 monthly contributions — to improve the airline's earning power.

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The contributions would go for the purchase of first-class tickets for "certain influential prospects" such as corporate travel directors and travel agents, the pilots' union said.

(*The Santa Fe New Mexican,* March 7, 1971.) Contributed by Leslie Wilson, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

NO KOSHER FOOD ON ARAB PLANES

BEIRUT — An Arab airline yesterday denied it had served Kosher meals — prepared by the Israeli airline El Al — to its Moslem passengers.

The Lebanese carrier Middle East Airlines-Air Liban said it "categorically denies that it ever deals with El Al or serves Kosher food to its passengers."

(*The San Francisco Chronicle,* February 19, 1971.) Contributed by Lewis H. Rubman, Berkeley, California.

*BRIEFS:* Pontiac changes the name of its new compact model to Ventura II from Cirrus after some Jewish auto dealers complain Cirrus sounds too much like the Yiddish word "tzores," which means trouble. (*The Wall Street Journal,* March 4, 1971.) Contributed by Robert J. Bresler, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

## HEADLINERS

POLLUTERS HAVE MEMBERS ON MANY STATE ANTIPOLLUTION BOARDS

(*The New York Times,* December 7, 1970.)

THE POPE CONDEMNS TORTURE

(*The New York Times,* December 2, 1970.)
Contributed by William Mather Boardman, New York, New York.

KARL TO EMPHASIZE NEED FOR DIPLOMA MILL ETHICS

(*St. Petersburg Times,* December 1, 1970.) Contributed by Wayne J. Douglass, Gainesville, Florida.

Editors' Note: *We'd like to remind our readers that they are invited to send in examples of nonsense. A free subscription to* PR *will be awarded for each contribution used. In case of a tie, single copies will be sent to the latecomers.*

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# BOOKS

## MR. BLOOM IN YEATSVILLE

**YEATS. By Harold Bloom. Oxford University Press. $12.50.**

"Yeats was a poet very much in the line of vision": the opening assertion in Harold Bloom's book doesn't mean that the poet is standing in such a way as to block our view, but that he is descended from Blake and Shelley, the truest visionaries from that visionary company of English romantic poets Bloom has spent so much energy in explication and praise of. What other opening assertions does it remind us of? Try "Swift was a great English writer" or "Milton's dislodgment has been effected with remarkably little fuss" or "Pope has had bad luck." These famous openers come from the works of a critic not mentioned in Bloom's book but who has devoted much criticism, indeed adverse criticism to Yeats's poetry; and perhaps the reasons for Leavis's absence (and that of certain other British critics like Knights or Savage or Ricks, all of whom have been less than fully admiring of Yeats) are worth exploring. For although Bloom insists in his preface that he has no wish "to deny the undoubted stature of Yeats's achievement" and ranks him with Hardy and Wallace Stevens as the only modern poets whose work is comparable to the great Romantics, he wishes to set this achievement "in historical perspective." In order to do this he has written a highly polemical book with an eye cocked at academic critics of Yeats whom he represents as, to a man, completely idolatrous. Against them Harold Bloom stands alone, embattled, tilting with the fools or monsters from the academy who swallow Yeats whole. While they slavishly defer to and create "current opinion" of Yeats, he (though teaching at Yale, a nonacademic critic) sees through to the falsity or silliness or confused thought of "highly regarded" poems like "The Gyres" or "Leda and the Swan." So his book as a whole has the air of a book that has been waited for, long overdue, clearing of the air, freshly revaluative; and its author often likes to see himself as mischievously insouciant, reminding us puckishly, or hopefully, that "Eliot and Pound may prove to be the Cowley and Cleveland of this age," and that Yeats, though a great poet, has "quite genuine limitations" which need to be examined.

The limitations become evident, Bloom feels, when Yeats's "descent" from Blake and Shelley is understood with the help of Borges's theory that a poet is not only influenced by but also *creates* his predecessors

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by swerving into creative misreading of them, thus protecting himself from their threatening examples while he is sustained by their achievement. Shelley's "Alastor" is seen as the prototypical poem defining Yeats's major mode, what Bloom terms the "antithetical quest-lyric" — "antithetical" meaning antinatural. Rather than wincing at the term as perhaps too evocative of the great classifier, Northrop Frye, it's important to notice that Bloom is not merely objective or classificatory in his use of it, since he has grave reservations about Yeats's whole pursuit of the antithetical mode. In discussing one of the last poems he commends Yeats for giving us his own

> . . . heroic humanism, free of rancor, bitterness, eugenic claptrap, and occult mummery. . . . But there is also a joy, not a tragic joy (which is nothing but *hysterica passio* disguised), but a growing natural joy, filling the depths of the empty heart. It is a joy of natural knowledge, purchased at the cost of power, unlike *antithetical* joy, but purchased at a good price. The knowledge is a finding of limited good, of a strength allowing mystery to be faced without mystification, and fright without mythology.

This revealing quotation reminds us that Bloom has always written in praise of humanism, admired it in the late Keats or in the work of Freud and found its supreme modern poetic representative to be Wallace Stevens who composed the great poem of man. Insofar as many Yeats poems insist on pursuing or celebrating antithetical or (as in "Lapis Lazuli") "tragic" joy, they must be judged and to that extent condemned as fallings-off, debasements of visionary humanism as seen at its most splendidly operative in the great poems of Blake and Shelley. It is therefore not surprising that Bloom's favorites among the later poems of Yeats are "A Dialogue of Self and Soul" and "Vacillation," where the antithetical soul is triumphed over by either Self or Heart, and where a humanist victory and acceptance of man's lot ("What theme had Homer but original sin?") is the joyful outcome.

What do these polemical and historical concerns have to do with the critic's major task of making individual poems more available to us, seeing them truly where before they were half-seen or falsely seen? As in his other books and essays Bloom deals with the individual poem largely though paraphrase of its content, comparison of its images and events with other poems and subjective commentary. He is always ready to call our attention to this or that "beautiful" passage ("These seem to me the most deeply moving lines in the poem") and to describe his feelings of approval or dislike regarding it. Such unabashed testimony is attractively provocative and has the good effect of making us test our responses against his: well, how deeply moving *is* that line anyway?

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But with regard to Yeats, Bloom's disapproval of the whole antithetical quest when it involves bitter feelings toward or cavalier disregard of the human lot, means he is wary of being moved by powerful lines that say things he does not admire or believe in. Speaking of *Ille's* "rhetoric" in *Ego Dominus Tuus*: "What has begun in Yeats is that marvelous style one fights in vain, for it can make any conviction, every opinion even, formidable out of all proportion to its actual imaginative validity." The quotation reveals Bloom's morally bifurcated response to poetry: he deeply believes that the "actual imaginative validity" of lines in *Ego Dominus Tuus* (the ones about Keats were in question) exists apart from their rhetorical appeal, and that if we're not careful the appeal may overwhelm and seduce us into assenting to invalid assertions. So, referring to the first five sections of "Meditations in Time of Civil War" he speaks of how "marvelous rhetoric has served to set forth only a complex of prejudices" as if we could separate the rhetoric from the prejudice, admire one and deplore the other. So he admits to admiring the "sonority" of "Leda and the Swan" but suspects it to be "power purchased by the loss of knowledge."

The power of Yeats's rhetoric is such that it has seduced academic critics into believing Middle Yeats superior to Early Yeats, while Late Yeats gets better and better. Bloom on the other hand has resisted such blandishments. By way of establishing, at a stroke, the superiority of Early Yeats to Middle, he quotes the first stanza of "O Do Not Love Too Long," a rather dull (and rather early) piece of Middle Yeats which begins

> *Sweetheart, do not love too long:*
> *I loved long and long,*
> *And grew to be out of fashion*
> *Like an old song.*

He comments: "The sentiment is doubtless admirable, but who could prefer the expression to this:

> *I would spread the cloths under your feet:*
> *But I, being poor, have only my dreams;*
> *I have spread my dreams under your feet;*
> *Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.*

The sentiment is hardly possible, but the expression has the accent of mastery. . . ." This confident and triumphant separation of "sentiment" from "expression" parallels the previously noted splitting-off of rhetoric from imaginative validity. There is also some critical bullying here, and in that spirit I can report that one academic critic of Yeats in my

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department always reserved particular scorn for this early poem and insisted on saying "dre-ams" in a mournful tone and as a spondee. In other words, many readers could well prefer the "sentiment" *and* the "expression" of Middle to Early Yeats; it may be only Harold Bloom who finds "'the rich lacquer [of *The Wind Among the Reeds*] protected against time's decay," or indeed likes Early Yeats so much that he often prefers the *really* early, unrevised versions of those poems.

The polemical habit is exhilarating and not always conducive to keeping one's head. When combined with Bloom's particular historical perspectivism it can add up to some bizarre effects, as when in his commitment to some particular poem or style he casts about furiously dealing death to others. He wants to praise "Adam's Curse" as a great poem, an overstatement I would let pass, but in doing this he must go on to insist parenthetically that "surely Yeats never wrote better, though this was 1902." (Why incidentally is it not then a triumphant vindication of Middle Yeats?) The point of the insistence is that because Eliot had admired "'Adam's Curse" as the start of a new and better Yeats, Bloom must reject that line of description by the Cowley of our age. Which he does by staggering us with judgments that are really forms of critical one-upmanship: "*The Madness of King Goll* is a better poem than *The Gyres*, and *The Wanderings of Oisin* shows a power of sustained invention that Yeats never demonstrated again." Sent to the bottom of the class for having never properly appreciated King Goll and Oisin we nevertheless wait for demonstration of the fineness of "Adam's Curse." And now the polemicist retires and allows the historical-perspectivist to take over: we are told that it is fine because "Epipsychidion" is behind it, because it is in the conversational style Shelley was so marvelous at, because it has much *sprezzatura* (a word overused by academic critics these days), because finally, in the culmination of Bloom's paraphrase,

> Shelley's waning moon, assimilated to his sea-shell of Promethean prophecy, comes to an end together with that prophecy, washed in the breaking days and years of the unfathomable sea of Shelley's brief lyric, *Time*. Nothing in Shelleyan quest allowed for the possibility of unrequited love, never one of the poet's many sorrows.

What happened to Yeats's great poem "Adam's Curse"? The same thing that happens to "The Cold Heaven" (another poem Bloom rightly much admires) in the following paragraph:

> Both *The Cold Heaven* and *The Magi* begin with a glance at the sky, the cold heaven of winter and the "pervading and indifferent blue" of an early autumn, respectively. . . . The sky is a Romantic image of division and fall, of a covering that must be rolled away

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> in the fullness of revelation. One thinks of Blake's obsession with the sky, "a void boundless as a nether sky" in the *Marriage,* and the many abominable skies of *The Four Zoas,* culminating in "the black incessant sky" of the apocalyptic Ninth Night, and contrasting with the redemptive "Sky is an immortal Tent built by the Sons of Los" in *Milton.*

We are then told about *Jerusalem,* about the sky of *Prometheus Unbound,* about how "Yeats stands beneath that Urizenic sky, a failed Promethean quester. . . ." The gracelessness of this language seems utterly inappropriate to the poised splendors of "The Cold Heaven," and when Bloom eventually calls it a "harrowing and effective vision" we may well feel it's effective mainly because it so effectively reminds him of other skies in his heroes Blake and Shelley, and even in his other hero Wallace Stevens whose words from "Sunday Morning" are misquoted in the excerpt above. It is hard to see how either "Adam's Curse" or "The Cold Heaven" become better or more comprehensible poems by subjecting them to this barrage of analogies with poets whose doctrines Bloom feels are more imaginatively valid than Yeats's own. Since for Bloom, greatness seems to occur when a poem is dialectically involved with great poets, this means that he spends much of his time writing *around* poems, or above them, praising a stanza for its manifestation of something called "High Romanticism" or "Sprezzatura" — or something Blakean, Shelleyan or Wallace Stevensian.

Let it be emphasized that much of the book is devoted to full, often brilliant commentary on *A Vision* and on the plays, while the treatments of certain poems which make Bloom uneasy ("Sailing to Byzantium" and "The Second Coming") and others he greatly admires ("Vacillation," "A Dialogue of Self and Soul") express the responses of a complicated, passionate reader. But my overall wish was that this reader would play it more by ear. In praising *Words for Music Perhaps* for its song, he adds almost by the way that "For the most part the argument of the songs in the middle of Yeats's series is in their movement, and needs commentary of a sort my limitations as a prosodist keep me from being able to contribute." But except for Saintsbury we all have limitations as prosodists, and perhaps "prosody" is not to the point here, or at least no more than it ever is: for, unless you separate "rhetoric" or "sonority" from substantial truth or validity, the argument of *any* Yeats poem is in its movement. Bringing that movement before us is a different task from defining Yeats's relationship to Shelley and Blake, or Gnosticism or the Promethean Quester. It's also different from insisting that one poem is of course far superior to another. In the presence of what seem to me Yeats's finest poems — "Easter 1916" and "Among School Children" — Bloom refuses to play it by ear and the spirit of his

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procedure hardens and rigidifies. Why is the last stanza of "Among School Children" memorable? Because it is Yeats's "protest against his own Gnostic dualism," and Bloom goes on to nag the reader with the possibility that the poem may be esteemed for the wrong reasons or "over-esteemed," as he thinks it is. (Leavis's admiration of the last stanza of "Among School Children" is similarly hedged round with grimaces: "There is nothing else like that in the collected poems. So far from its being the proof of an achieved stability and wholeness in the poet, the ugliest and most disturbing expression of inner discord and rebellion or despair to be found in his *oeuvre* mark his final phase.") Why does "Easter 1916" receive only a half-page treatment in a five hundred page book? Because it is a "puzzling" poem whose "excellences are uncharacteristic of Yeats" and because it is a "model of sanity and proportion," therefore in telling contrast to some later poems Bloom then proceeds to name and execrate. You have the sense then that "Easter 1916" is positively an embarrassment to the critic; Bloom's grudging admission of its fineness can be understood only in the context of his whole elaborate attempt to insist on Yeats's "descent" from the Romantics in a second sense: oh, what a falling-off was there! Does the road of excess lead to the palace of wisdom? A non-Blakean, I would have to say yes and no, which I found myself often saying as I read and resisted this invigorating, excessive book.

**William H. Pritchard**

## 2001

BETWEEN TWO AGES; AMERICA'S ROLE IN THE TECHNETRONIC ERA. By Zbigniew Brzezinski. New York: Viking, 1970.

One of the characteristics of utopian literature is its lack of dramatic possibility. The quantification of human problems, the settlement of conflict by proxy and above all, the absense of political involvement makes the future a haven of sloth. The classic technique is a traveler's account of an unexpected voyage to a strange land, whose

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benefits are patiently explained by some loyal member of the new society. The feeling of being a passive observer, a dreamer and an intruder into utopia is often overpowering, and sometimes the unexpected effect is the reader's relief to be back in the age of industrial violence and sexual warfare.

"Futurology," which is generally some institute's funded study of the United States a few years hence, shares with utopian literature one point: it scarcely leaves the present, or so exaggerates it that it is just a caricature. In the ledger of this literature, what matters most is the increase of television sets, cars, cultural devices, money and the decrease of political strife, violence, crime and poverty. Zbigniew Brzezinski's *Between Two Ages* is neither utopian literature nor futurology — principally because it is less contrived — but it is similar to both in tone. It is a projection of the idea that modern technology will prevail over ideology and provincialism, and that world society will witness the withering away of the political crisis of our day. Optimistically, it makes the forces of social integration so powerful nothing can stop them.

Brzezinski begins his work with what is surely an epilogue, the proclamation of a new technetronic age, and ends with some benign advice on foreign policy, such as the streamlining of the diplomatic service, global economic development through lending institutions and a defense posture directed to a few selected spots. He does not demonstrate how the new age will grow out of the present one, and his long lists of opinion polls scarcely point to a revolution in feeling or in social awareness. Brzezinski really needs a new period in world history, for only a new period can bypass the immediate social dilemmas which he will not and cannot face in this book.

The technetonic age, proclaimed somewhat earlier by Bzrezinski in *Encounter,* is another name for the triumph of American technology over the world community. And this is what he means when he argues that the United States is the most revolutionary world society, containing all of the blueprints for a new world order. What happens elsewhere is ancillary; in fact, he defines the underdeveloped nations of the world as ghettos. This remarkable ethnocentrism — which sees most of human society living on primitive reservations — isolates five changes in American society and calls them universal. The technetronic age is marked by a new form of social and business managerialism and expertise; by mass education; by the quantification of social problems — that is the end of controversy over ends and the beginning of solutions; by the communications revolution; and by the creation of a global unity.

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These changes, Brzezinski claims, have led to the triumph of pragmatism. Hence there is no longer any need for nationalism, ideologies or integrative ideals, with the exception, as he adds later, of American liberalism. Pragmatism means the rise of true equality and the exercise of reason in world affairs. Passion, religiosity and emotion, he contends, are the reactionary sentiments of those who cannot face the future or delight in the cultural irrationalities of the generation gap. Among these, the antiquarian Marxists and "totalitarian" New Leftists, abetted by the New York Revolutionary Cultural Establishment, pose a truly reactionary threat to the technetronic age, because, he concludes, they understand much of what it means and yet oppose it.

Brzezinski is best writing about his own field. When he turns to consider the future of the Soviet Union, he writes an interesting essay on its current industrial and ideological lethargy. The Russians, he argues, have built a society which shuts out rapid technological and social change for the sake of preserving a reactionary social model. And he predicts that the Soviets will fall behind in goodsmanship, technology and influence, and that they will not serve as a model for world industrialization. The key to change in that society will be, he writes, growing pluralism, cooperation with the United States and political integration in the world community. This will come about gradually through the attrition of old Soviet leadership and the desire of new technological classes to free themselves and their work from ideology. Although Brzezinski has apparently buried the cold war banner, and even praises Marx now that he appears to be irrelevant, he justifies a division between East and West on other grounds. The United States represents the future, and Russia the past, and therefore, almost any kind of industrial development will eventually triumph over the Soviets. Technology—and not capitalism or the United States, apparently — is anti-Communist.

In some ways this evaluation is intriguing. Obviously, the Soviet Union, as a society today, offers little to emulate in the way of social freedoms. The vast distortions of Soviet industrialization map a devious route toward modernization, and one which other nations will not want to reproduce. Probably, most would, if they could, choose the American way, that is, if they could somehow be able to re-create those impossibly opportune conditions of the nineteenth century. Or they might let us develop them, which may well happen. That plainly is what the author intends.

The heart of the technetronic revolution and the core of Brzezinski's argument center around the United States. Most of American so-

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ciety, Brzezinski believes, is entering new social, political and emotional relationships because of mass education, the communications revolution and the advance of technology. For the rest — the Black and the poor — there has been a kind of technological lapse or neglect. We have simply not yet programed them for a genuine role in society, or applied modern science and sociology to their problems. Thus America, like the world, has its ghettos. After quoting some employment figures on the government's use of experts, in which the number of social scientists and psychologists is extremely low, he offers his solutions: more expertise, more technology and more manipulation.

It is here that the artificiality and distortion of his argument is most glaring. Brzezinski celebrates the separation of politics from science. American politics, he contends (quite rightly), are often irrelevant and harmful, but not, as he says, because they are passionate or emotional. They are harmful because there is so little that is political left in them. Technology has been isolated from politics and from social control. Urban ghettos and rotting cities are not just forgotten areas, they are technological junkyards. Pollution (which apparently he doesn't see as much of a problem) and the general decay that constitutes a total and perhaps final assault upon nature in the name of progress are the result of technological improvement. Adding experts who specialize in human manipulation to run things is no solution, but merely the admission that scientific and technological training have so distorted men that they cannot be trusted to act in any way except as specialists. Hence most decision-making about technology has been delegated to corporations or institutes or universities. The abandonment of political control over the application of science has made technology almost entirely a tool of profit-making and manipulation.

Of course, there are some Americans who are out of step in this parade of progress. Foremost is the New Left which has by and large a "neo-totalitarian reaction to the third American Revolution." He clearly dislikes the exuberance and strong hatreds of youth, particularly because they have a chance to spoil it all. And the liberals, he continues, have been conditioned in the past to an irrational rejection of the future, and an excessive conscience when it comes to the nontechnetronic elements in society. It would be best to make peace with science and with the majority of Americans and then regain the liberal's best assets, "his optimism, his faith in America's future, his vision."

The final point of the argument is a celebration of America's continuing frontier tradition. From the primitive, driving conquest of a continent to the dramatic capture of the moon, the main force, he con-

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tends, has been the need to expand. The thrust of technology into other countries is a final step in a history of national aggressiveness, and the beginning of a new integrated, global world. While many historians have seen such expansion as the result of national instability, Brzezinski argues that worldwide expansion has led to the awareness of internal problems and the means of solving them. Thus imperialism for Brzezinski promotes freedom, and the new technological age will produce a final solution to the world's problems.

In some ways this is an impressive statement of what America's most astute social engineers must be thinking. It may well be a prediction that will come true — if, as Brzezinski lightly assumes, there should be economic stability and a continuous flow of inventions, and if we are not diverted along the way to an ultimate confrontation with another power. At the end of the book, almost as an afterthought, he admits that "in the technetronic era, philosophy and politics will be crucial," which is the first time either philosophy or politics appear in his bland portrait of the future. They come far too late to humanize this mechanistic paradise.

**James Gilbert**

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## VISIONS OF BATTLEMENTS

DELIVERANCE. By James Dickey. Houghton Mifflin. $5.95.
THE BAY OF NOON. By Shirley Hazzard. Atlantic-Little, Brown. $5.95.
CONY-CATCHING. By Kirby Farrell. Atheneum. $8.95.
1968. By Richard Stern. Holt, Rinehart and Winston. $5.95.

To say of a book that it's the work of a lady novelist is to do more than comment on the author's gender; it is also to describe a genre in fairly recognizeable ways and to put it down. Another instance of the inequality of the sexual burdens — for while machismo may be morally offensive, it is the matter of some very good books. Shirley Hazzard's genteel *The Bay of Noon* is defined by its limitations; James Dickey's *Deliverance* manages to transcend them. It is written with a tough loveliness and its silly ideology does not get in the way of its doing what a good novel should do — persuade us to accept its terms and thoroughly absorb us when we do.

Four ordinary, bored, middle-aged businessmen from the South embark on a weekend canoe trip. They are seeking — the novel is explicit from the beginning about the spiritual significance of this journey — deliverance, from the pervasive inconsequence of their lives, from the failure of potency. Their leader, Lewis — "the only man I knew," remarks the narrator, Ed, "who could do with his life what he wanted to" — has mapped out a difficult river through an all but inaccessible forest. As the whole terrain will soon be dammed up in the press of civilization, it is perhaps a last chance, Lewis implies, for them to get to the source of things. Loyal to the rules of their game, they leave technology behind and take only bows and arrows, putting them at an incredible disadvantage when the violence which we feel is coming begins. But Ed, who eventually replaces Lewis as the leader, will come to understand that the fight for the body's survival is the soul's resurrection; for, as Lewis says, like all the heroes of Lawrence and Hemingway before him, "The body is the one thing you can't fake."

Unexpectedly, the vital confrontation is put to them not by the land but by two hillbillies with guns who assault one of them sexually and who turn the remaining two days of the weekend into a terrifying rite of passage from which there is no recall and from which they will emerge as murderers or not at all. It is a journey to the limit of experience which many never touch and from which Ed returns twice-born. Some men look closer to home, in a difficult confrontation with their loveless jobs and their mechanical brides. *Deliverance* turns instead to

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the fantasies of an adolescent boy, the myth of the American frontier.

But only on the surface. Behind cowboys and Indians is a novel about intimate connections. On one level the novel is knit together by narrative; on another, by variations on a single image which recurs like an obsessive dream. In the opening pages it is of a model that Ed is photographing for a faintly pornographic advertisement in which she is to be seen from behind, nude to her panties. It is the first of many such recognitions.

The image comes back to him the morning of the departure, when he screws his wife — from behind — and it is in this passage that the novel first speaks its title:

> It was the heat of another person around me, the moving heat, that brought the image up. The girl from the studio threw back her hair and clasped her breast, and in the center of Martha's heaving and expertly moving back, the gold eye shone, but not with the practicality of sex . . . but the promise of it that promised other things, another life, deliverance.

And of course it appears as the act of violence which instigates the action of the novel: Bobby, forced to drop his pants and offer himself across a log "in an obscene posture no one could help."

That part of the body which can never be an object for its own eyes is also the point of rape, the access to the soul which men and women share. Trust is turning one's back to another. And *coitus a tergo* functions in the novel as metaphor for the moment of risk and revelation which translates love into murder and murder into love. When Ed finally tracks down and ambushes his would-be killer, it will again be from behind, as the climax of an extraordinary kind of communion:

> I had thought so long and hard about him that to this day I still believe I felt, in the moonlight our minds fuse. . . . If Lewis had not shot his companion, he and I would have made a kind of love, painful and terrifying to me, in some dreadful way pleasurable to him, but we would have been together in the flesh, there on the floor of the woods. . . .

Many of Dickey's poems too are about astonishing connections. I think offhand of "Power and Light," "The Sheep Child," "Celebration" and the whimsical "Encounter in the Cage Country." In fact, I am perhaps most grateful to *Deliverance* for sending me back to Mr. Dickey's poetry, not because I like it better than his prose, but because I hadn't realized how good it also is.

*The Bay of Noon* is to me an annoying book. Certainly Miss Hazzard has a gift for place. Like her earlier book, *The Evening of the Holiday,* her new novel is set in Italy, and Naples is by far its most

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interesting character. But her nuance inflects nothing; though there is the sound of sensibility, I find that it lacks the sense — not because of a preference for subtlety of feeling to scope and power, but because there isn't much feeling to begin with.

This is in a way unfair, because the novel intends to be about a kind of barrenness. Its heroine, Jenny, recognizes herself as one of those young English girls she describes so well, over whom "hung an immanence, a pale expectancy, as if their youth were yet to come to them. What passion they possessed for change had, in getting them to Naples, expended itself; once there, they relapsed into their natural obligingness." Like other English heroines, Miss Hazzard's finds in Italy a profusion of the emotional life which her own puritanical climate has not allowed to bloom. "Here," Jenny says at the end, ". . . I had come to my senses."

But in this as in many other things she doesn't tell the novel's truth. We see no awakening in the flesh; only a discovery of the human capacity for betrayal. The streets of Naples are paved with lava and Mount Vesuvius looms over the novel as a reminder that disaster minds no mood or weather. Yet Jenny's is a hollow echo of the disaster of Milly Theale's similar discovery in *The Wings of the Dove*. The innocence of James's heroine partook of a fullness of the imagination, not a lack of it, and her capacity for tragedy was an expression of her very real generosity, her capacity for love. Jenny reveals the smallness of her spirit and the inconsequence of its journey in the story when she remarks, "I had ceased to be accommodating. I suppose that is what is known as the loss of innocence."

Unfortunately the novel is stuck where Jenny is. Passion is named, but never created; mood goes nowhere, illumines nothing; claim is made to nostalgia, but this too is not justified by anything we are shown. "Though one cannot always remember exactly why one has been happy, there is no forgetting that one was," Miss Hazzard quotes from Auden at the beginning. But what follows is a cool story of a young woman who lives only in the reflections of the lives of others, and knows that she does. Is this the happy time? We have no reason either to take the novel's word for it that Jenny was in love with her brother (a sexless *menage á trois* to which she became no longer useful and which accounts for her move from England to Italy); nor Jenny's word — as the narrator she recalls not only the period in Naples which forms the novel's substance but its significance to her later — that Justin, a young Scotsman whom she meets in Naples and "loses" to her friend Giaconda, really means something to her. And finally we are given no reason to believe that her stay in Naples has been, as the novel suggests, some kind of momentous crossing toward self-recognition.

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Kirby Farrell's first novel ("cony-catching" — the art of the confidence man) is also, in a very different temper, about deception and self-deception, love a game of confidence betrayed. As one of the characters says, "every love affair is a detective story the object of which is to identify not the criminal alone, but the crime also."

Mr. Farrell loves words, and his images often strike me as exact: a broken window "seeds" the rug with glass; a woman tuning a harpsichord "trips each note over and over until it warps into pitch in a muffled alarum." But as for his larger theme, I never did identify either criminal or crime and fairly quickly came not to care whether I did. For it is the manner of fiction which appeals to Mr. Farrell and not the mind. The story is narrated, á la *The Alexandria Quartet* to which it owes much, from three different points of view; characters appear before they are properly introduced; tense shifts not only between action and recollection but between innumerable past and past presents. And none of these devices serves to focus and refocus the reader's consciousness in surprising ways; they simply lead it astray.

Moving between Cambridge and Cape Cod, the novel concerns a lot of fairly decadent characters: an ambivalent harpsichordist, Naomi Balfour, and a pontificating writer, Sebastian DeNuys, both of whom we are told at the beginning will die — or rather, have died — in violent and pointless ways; the first narrator, Clive Halwynd, who from time to time shares Naomi and her harpsichord with Sebastian; an archaeologist, a wealthy Radcliffe girl, a wealthy industrialist and so on. The intrigues are not only sexual but economic and political.

Nothing comes from all this — no marvelously baroque portrait of an involuted society, not, as promised, a psychological mystery story, not a tale of relationships interesting on their own account. Once one has identified the characters by profession and class there is little else to say about them. And I find that the theme of deception between people who are portrayed as so little able to commit themselves to anything in the first place is self-deceived. Halwynd says at the beginning that he wants "to make a poetry of the past, to feel a tide of words sifting it harmlessly" out of his mind. He speaks, unwittingly I presume, for the accomplishment of the novel as a whole.

In the year of the assassinations of Kennedy and King and of the Chicago convention, a composer, Wendt, spends a summer with his wife and teen-age children in paradisal Santa Barbara. He is at work on his *Opus 43,* an opera about the loves of Horace Walpole.

This is the protagonist of the short novel which, together with a

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number of short stories collected largely, so far as I can see, at random, make up Richard Stern's new book, *1968*. It doesn't deserve that title; but then perhaps no work of fiction could. And the funny and acerbic portrait of a contemporary Nero, the composer-hero of the short novel, *Veni, Vidi . . . Wendt,* fiddling while America burns, is perhaps not a bad way of speaking to our illness. Some of my best friends are irrelevant.

"East, West . . . Midwest," my favorite story here, is also about the radical isolation of the intellect from its own condition. Bidwell, a minor historian hung up on Genghis Khan, is no more obviously insane than the rest of us. But poor Miss Cameron who occasionally types his manuscripts is quite mad, and so moved by the story of Börte's rape and impregnation by a Mongolian warrior that she fantasies Börte's child within her. She jumps to her suicide at the end, but fortunately not before writing Bidwell a letter which I find incredibly touching:

> Dear Mr. Bidwell,
>
> I know I caused you trouble. My mind troubled. The man at the window — was it not you? I would say it was real, though I know you could not have been at such a place. But did you not mean it for me? Sitting there with your glasses, so kindly, why not? The world thinks Genghis a monster, but you showed me how in bad times, he drank his saliva and ate his gums, slept on his elbow and saved his Börte. Did you not mean me to know I was to you what Börte was to him? I cannot quite straighten it out. But remain
>
> Very truly yours,
>
> (*Miss*) *Frederick Cameron*

Only Richard Stern, I think, could have guided Freddie Cameron to such a letter. His writing throughout these stories yields a rather amazing kind of satire, at once gentle and biting.

**Marcia Cavell**

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## I HEAR AMERICA SINGING

**AUDUBON: A VISION. By Robert Penn Warren. Random House. $4.00.**

**THE GEORGE WASHINGTON POEMS. By Diane Wakoski. East Side Book Store. $2.00.**

**THE COMMON SHORE. By Robert Kelly. Black Sparrow Press. $4.50.**

**GUNSLINGER. BOOKS I & II. By Edward Dorn. Black Sparrow Press. $4.00 each volume.**

The "vision" of Robert Penn Warren's *Audubon* is of two kinds: one invokes that pictorial sense which allowed Audubon to observe and record the birds of America; the other, that sense of the dream which prompted his grand project in the wilderness. This doubleness, along with his uncertainty as to his origins and identity, gives a peculiarly American definition to the Audubon of Warren's poem. His fascination in the wilderness and his business enterprises in Europe; his immersion in the texture of natural things and the abstraction necessary to his great and public design; the precision of his rifle, which was the necessarily brutal instrument for getting the "material" for the precision of his art — this play of contradictory forces makes him seem a type of the American artist. Indeed, some of this same doubleness characterizes Warren's poetry: on the one hand, he sees events as part of a great fabric of gothic American history, as in *Brother to Dragons,* while on the other he offers modest and precise renderings of things seen and felt, near yet hard to explain, as in "The Day Dr. Knox Did It." There is in his work an impulse toward final and epic conception, combined with the instinct for exact perception in the tentative forms of lyric and conversation. And it is perhaps for this reason that the figure of Audubon appeals to him: as an example of how vision and fact can be brought together. The achieved balance works to make this Robert Penn Warren's finest poem.

For the most part we see Audubon "walking in the world," without a definition of joy, without a name for the world, without the recovery of what is lost:

> *We never know what we have lost, or what we have found.*
> *We are only ourselves, and that promise.*
> *Continue to walk in the world. Yes, love it!*

In the poem this "love" means the act of seeing, the wonder at what is present. It means that the other vision — the dream of distances — comes to us through what is immediate, and is finally sustained by it:

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*So [Audubon] died in his bed, and*
*Night leaned, and now leans,*
*Off the Atlantic, and is on schedule.*
*Grass does not bend beneath that enormous weight*
*That with no sound sweeps westward. In the Mississippi,*
*On a mud bank, the wreck of a great tree, left*
*By flood, lies, the root-system and now-stubbed boughs*
*Lifting in darkness. It*
*Is white as bone. That whiteness*
*Is reflected in dark water, and a star*
*Thereby.*

We're told that Audubon "knew the lust of the eye," and in this kind of visual composition Warren makes us believe it. Or with perceptions like: "the bear, / Daft in the honey-light, yawns." *Audubon* is finally Robert Penn Warren's vision, and his eye and his voice teach us a new affection for the world.

In Diane Wakoski's *The George Washington Poems* a nameless "you" is addressed but the relationship adduced to the world is a bitter one. The discontinuity of America, of George Washington to our present, is imaged as one of the failures of love. George Washington is present only in that national parody we pass off as history: George Washington Slept Here, The Cherry Tree, Martha. The distances separating now from then, myth from reality, are not visionary, no, not even that. We learn that the speaker's father, her husband, her lover, have all left her. And so has the type of all of them, George Washington. Yet the fact that there *is* a type works to offset the dislocations of her life. The expression of those dislocations is part of the great strength of these poems:

*Here in this place*
*you and I slept. We dreamed*
*in unison*
*of the grey battleships*
*They came secretly into the harbor*
*and in fatigues you watched them lining up*
*cannons, missiles, the accoutrements*
*of war.*
*But a pair of red shoes*
*stained red from a gaping hole in my arm*
*was sitting on deck*
*tiny, pointed, high-heeled,*
*and the gunners could not miss them,*
*threw them*
*overboard.*

But because "George Washington Slept Here" (the name of this poem), another and more promising kind of talk is possible:

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*Oh, Washington,*
*you slept here,*
*you left the imprint of your tired head*
*in the goosey pillow.*
*My own historical bed is empty without you,*
*father of my country.*

The George Washington myths serve to express the failure of a woman's relations to her men, but the myths also give her a means of talking about it. Partly *because* "George" is so distant, he can be a safe listener, a discreet recipient of letters. At his remove he can allow her a voice that can reaffirm human connections, impossible at closer ranges. This process of recovery is at its best in the fine and moving poem, "The Father of My Country," a woman's statement to the father who left home when she was a child, while some of the later poems, where we are told of a relation between her and a Black Uncle Sam, push too hard on historical analogy. Surely it isn't necessary that we be *all* the country's history. But by the last poems of the book we see that the analogies have served well enough. The diffused emotion of the early poems becomes an assertive human voice: "I won't take a lot of shit." George Washington is returned to the past, once more a quaint anachronism. The final poem can insist upon his failures, for Diane Wakoski knows very well the danger of falling in love with distance — love for The Father of Our Country may make us unloving "patriots." When we arrive at "Triumph" in the last poem, it is an act of recovery, of making new both personal and national histories. *The George Washington Poems* beautifully enact the reemergence of a woman and the possibility of loving.

Robert Kelly's *The Common Shore* makes no such personal claims. The epic voice of his long poem seldom comes near us — at least not in these first five books. The poem is subtitled *A Long Poem About America in Time,* and it doesn't mean America isn't late. The high solemnity of "America" and "Time" (to say nothing of "Long") sets the tone for what follows. Which is to say that *The Common Shore* contains some solemn foolishness, but that it also rises now and then to meet its ambitions. Kelly has a talent for a wide variety of verse technique. And he knows what he's doing in attempting a long poem about America, trying to bring together that impossible series of opposing tendencies which describe our national life:

*Me & America*
*My words & Things*
*Ideas & Facts*
*History & Now*

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*Distance & Nearness*
*Landscape & Houses*
*Many (people) & One (person)*
*One (nation) & Many (individuals)*
*Spirit & Flesh*
*America & Me*

The trouble with the poem is that it wants to settle for such a paradigm as this. What Kelly knows comes to us as theories and notes for a poem, not as poetry. But the deficiencies, if such they are, result in part from Kelly's scrupulousness: as if he must accept the fact that from one view of America any contrary now seems impossible. One cannot easily speak for what is Near *and* what is Distant, for Me *and* America, Flesh *and* Spirit. So we most often hear of what the poem *might* do, but won't. Kelly will allow no central and personal "I" to hold the contraries together. The language lacks what Whitman, always giving himself away, called "amativeness," what Warren calls loving the world. Although Kelly insists much more than does Diane Wakoski that there *are* possible relations and connections, his poems seem even more an expression of loneliness.

In *The Vessels* ("vessels" both the art and the women by which we come to the discovery of America) he comes nearest to convincing us that his words are *about* something. But even one of the best of these, "(*Memorial Day*)," almost rejects its subject, women in the park, by snobbishly "forgiving them / for what they are / & will never be." Their physical reality seems to trouble him, this "unwilling / participation / in ourselves." He seems to regret that they have "no memorial but the distance / implicit in my / eye." Poor mortals. Most of the poem easily avoids them, escaping into poetic distances: obscure allusions, nostalgia for the medieval, truncated syntax, precious metaphors, solemn puns, bookish vocabulary. Strangely enough Kelly knows this (see, for example, the poems "Stood before the dark building" and "The Surveyor"), but he appears to be unwilling to take the trouble and risk of putting his words in relation to the world. This big poem goes everywhere and takes us nearer to nothing. Keep your distance, America.

Edward Dorn's *Gunslinger I* and *II* begins a great comic poem about the many ways in which all of us, poets or not, ask and expound the "meaning" of America. Like *Don Juan* it is a comedy of the failures of love, but it locates those failures in our love for the distances of inner and outer landscape. Appropriately, *Gunslinger* is a travel narrative. It tells us of The Gunslinger who comes knocking at the narrator's door with a map of our domain: "If it is where you are, / . . . he will unroll the map of love." The narrator needs it, and follows the

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Gunslinger with all the devotion of a tenderfoot. We learn of a strange mission, which requires that Gunslinger pursue an "inscrutable" Texan named Howard Hughes, and in Book I this takes them abruptly to the saloon in Mesilla. The action is mostly talk, between characters who share the various tasks and questions of exploring American distances: the proprietress Lil, possibly Enigmatic and Beautiful, chattering in the present but part of "Slinger's" mysterious past; a Horse, high on cigars and grass, who takes charge of mapping their route; a Drifter/Poet, who plays upon an Absolute Guitar. In Book II, on the way to Universe City, they pick up a wayfaring acidhead, Cool Everything. Cool is a man of media, delighted at a new machine called a Literate Projector. One puts into it a 35mm film of any subject, and it projects on the screen a script of the event: "It will invent a whole new literachure / which was already there."

Dorn's narrative is zany and delightful. Its incoherence troubles the characters far more than the reader.

*To See*
*is their desire*
*as they wander estranged*
*through the lanes of the Tenders*
*of Objects*
*who implore this existence*
*for a plan and dance wideyed*
*provided with a schedule*
*along the selvedge of time.*

While the Horse knows the way, it is mostly The Gunslinger who sees design. We don't know what the design might be; we can't be sure he knows; and we learn by watching the narrator that we don't even know how to ask. Gunslinger is a careful construction of platitudes: the nameless Westerner, from a mysterious past and with a vague mission ("I am the son of the sun," he says); he knows everything and speaks with literal precision and understatement; he carefully explains the manner of his actions, as if style is his mission, and motive and end are irrelevant; he is impossibly quick and accurate with his gun (he has eliminated the draw); his Horse is not only intelligent but dogmatic and garrulous. Opposite Gunslinger is the narrator, named "I." He is the naïve outsider, the "refugee" who uncomprehendingly tells of events without apparent depth or meaning, in a landscape of stage props and false fronts. He asks too many questions, tells too much about himself ("What's your name? / I, I answered"). In Book II he dies, apparently of overdefinition ("it is dangerous to be named / and makes you mortal").

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The question of meanings is part of the journey: "Our mission," says Gunslinger, "is to encourage the Purity of the Head/pray we don't lose track of our goal." Dorn uses the language as well as the situations of the Western to keep our heads alert and curious. The Gunslinger speaks from a knowledge that we don't share. He perceives without poetry, may *be* a poem, and will not comprehend questions of meaning or cause. Or he may be a man of absolute ignorance. His speeches are directed from some distance toward another distance, and like the narrator we try to intercept meanings. But like him, we remain newcomers overhearing a tall tale told by insiders. These first books of *Gunslinger* make us careful about meanings, scrupulous about the questions we ask. But there is some danger that the poem might become a too easy tour of American confusions. At the end Cool Everything is guiding the poem, and it nearly becomes as superficial as he is. This is part of the difficulty of a Hero who can't risk "doing" things that will define him. Perhaps the narrator, at the end of Book II revived and ultimately stoned after being embalmed with acid, will appear in a new role. We await more of this incisive and delightful play — gunplay, wordplay and horseplay. We wait for *Gunslinger III,* more careful about how we see America, and wiser in the use of its distances.

**Norman Martien**


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## NOTES

(*Continued from page 6*)

line," he tells us, "for the express purpose of teaching only undergrads." . . . **MICHAEL HARRINGTON**'s new book, **Socialism,** will be out in spring 1972. . . . **ARTHUR SCHLESINGER, Jr.,** is Albert Schweitzer Professor of the Humanities at CUNY. . . . Oxford will bring out **NORMAN BIRNBAUM**'s **Toward a Critical Sociology** in the fall. His latest book was **The Crisis of Industrial Society** (also Oxford), and he's working on another one on universities and the end of bourgeois culture. Mr. Birnbaum will be abroad next year on a Guggenheim. . . . Little-Brown is bringing out **MARTIN JAY**'s book on the Frankfurt School. Mr. Jay has recently completed his Ph.D. at Harvard and will teach history at Berkeley in the fall. . . . **WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD** teaches English at Amherst and sometimes gives concert piano recitals. . . . **JAMES GILBERT** tells us he will be in Europe for a year or so. . . . **MARCIA CAVELL** teaches at NYU and will be at Queens College this fall. . . . **NORMAN MARTIEN** helps the children at Equinox School, Eureka, California, with their newspaper, and, he writes us, "practices the art of growing things organically."

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